

**The role of early attachment experiences and social  
rank in the affect regulation for adolescents who  
have been violent**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Introduction**

The current research is of an exploratory nature and is concerned with gaining a better understanding regarding why young people are violent. The ability or lack of ability to regulate affect has been associated with violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002). Attachment and social rank have been identified as systems associated with affect regulation (Sloman *et al.*, 2002). Therefore the possible role regarding attachment and social rank, will be investigated in relation to affect regulation for young people who have been violent.

### **Method**

Young people (age range 12-16 years old) who had been violent were interviewed. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and then transcribed. Grounded theory methodology was used to code the data and to identify emerging themes within the data.

### **Results**

The findings presented the following core categories: - *attachment; affect; self; and violence*. A primary category *processing* was identified as being central to producing a tentative model which demonstrated a relationship between the core categories.

## **Discussion**

The tentative model identified the level to which young people have made sense or *processed* their early attachment experiences, their experiences with respect to affect regulation and their sense of self on both an individual and an interpersonal level. Further research is necessary to elucidate the tentative model found within the present research in terms of confirming the finding of Sloman *et al.* (2002) that social rank is a system used to regulate affect when attachment systems have been insufficient in terms of regulating affect.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current research is of an exploratory nature and is concerned with gaining a better understanding regarding why young people are violent. The ability or lack of ability to regulate affect has been associated with violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002). Attachment and social rank have been identified as systems associated with affect regulation (Sloman *et al.*, 2002). The introduction will set the scene with a discussion of attachment theory and social rank, and their possible role regarding affect regulation for young people who have been violent.

Literature was gathered for the present study by computer aided search engine (PsychINFO) and text books. The main concepts: - attachment; social rank; affect regulation; and violence were used to gather literature. This research has taken a conceptual and theoretical approach regarding existing literature rather than providing a critique. An aim of this research is to fill a gap in existing literature regarding providing a better understanding regarding why young people are violent, by going directly to young people themselves. It is also believed that the current research is of current social relevance and fits in with ongoing youth justice developments, in terms of 'policy developments aimed at improving the effectiveness of response to youth crime' (Whyte, 2003).

## 1.1 Attachment

- **Bowlby**

John Bowlby (1907-1990) is the founder of attachment theory, publishing his trilogy attachment and loss (attachment; separation: anger and anxiety; and loss: sadness and depression) in 1969, 1973 and 1980 respectively. Bowlby began his study of what was to become attachment theory in relation to observing how a 'very young child behaves towards his mother, both in her presence and especially in her absence' (Bowlby 1969, p3). He stated that this type of observation 'can contribute greatly to our understanding of personality development' (Bowlby, 1969, p3). Bowlby began his career studying psychology before going on to qualify in medicine and then to specialise in adult psychiatry. He went on to become a psychoanalyst, training with Melanie Klein. Psychoanalytic views regarding the 'child's tie to his mother' (Bowlby, 1969, p177) were concerned with object relations and unconscious processes. While Bowlby was training with Klein their approaches began to differ. Bowlby was emphasising the importance of the relationship between the mother and child while Klein was emphasising the role of the child's fantasies about the mother (Schwartz, 1999). It has been noted that Bowlby's emerging attachment theory was 'alien to the Kleinian outlook' and that he was effectively ostracized by the psychoanalytic community (Schwartz, 1999). Freud as the founding father of the psychoanalytic community viewed the first six years of life as being vulnerable to trauma. Trauma and the related neurosis were believed by Freud to be linked to an immature and feeble ego (Bowlby, 1969). The separation of a child from the mother can therefore be viewed by Freud as a traumatic experience.

- **Theories Predating Attachment Theory**

Prior to the emerging attachment theory the importance of the 'child's tie to the mother' was acknowledged, although the perspectives on the processes relating to the 'tie to the mother' were not agreed. There were four theories pre-dating attachment theory regarding the origin of the 'child's tie to the mother':- secondary drive theory; primary object sucking; primary object clinging; and return-to-womb craving (Bowlby, 1969). The secondary drive theory is regarding physiological needs being met such as the need for sustenance. Primary object sucking and primary object clinging theories are in relation to the child becoming attached to an adult who fulfils their needs in terms of providing a breast to suck or a body to cling to. Primary return-to-womb craving has been 'dismissed as both redundant and biologically implausible' (Bowlby, 1969, p180); while the secondary drive theory maintained the most plausibility.

- **Emergence of Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory has been an extremely influential theory within child development and therefore providing a foundation regarding an understanding of attachment theory feels like an appropriate starting place regarding improving insight regarding the behaviour of young people. The scene has therefore been set as an introduction to attachment theory in terms of introducing John Bowlby and briefly outlining the theoretical framework prior to attachment theory regarding the importance of and the possible processes relating to the 'child's tie to his mother'. The emergence of attachment theory as an explanation regarding the importance of

the child's tie to the mother began with Bowlby's work in relation to his work with maladjusted boys who were in residential care, 'Forty-four juvenile thieves: Their characters and home life' (Bowlby, 1944). Bowlby's early work 'convinced him that major disruptions in the mother-child relationship are precursors of later psychopathology' (Cassidy, 1999). Bowlby's work therefore relates directly to the current research and provides a link between early family relationships and subsequent psychopathology. Bowlby together with a colleague James Robertson went on to state that 'children experience extreme distress when separated from their mothers, even if they were fed and cared for by others'. They noted that 'a predictable pattern emerged' that being 'one of angry protest followed by despair' (Robertson & Bowlby, 1952).

At the time Bowlby and Robertson were identifying patterns regarding the separation of mother and child, the secondary drive theory was one of the most widely accepted theories regarding the nature of the child's tie to the mother. However Lorenz (2002) found that infant geese could become attached to parents even if the parents did not feed them. Harlow (1958) noted that infant rhesus monkeys preferred a cloth-covered 'mother' in times of distress as opposed to a wire-mesh 'mother' that provided food.

Bowlby was also influenced by other studies regarding the child's tie to the mother namely early studies in Uganda by Ainsworth (1963, 1967) and in Scotland by Schaffer and Emerson (1964). Ainsworth noted 'in one group of African infants, crying and attempts to follow occurred in one infant as early as fifteen and seventeen

weeks respectively and that both sorts of behaviour were common at six months of age' (Ainsworth, 1963). Schaffer and Emerson (1964) noted similar behaviour in a study of Scottish children, finding that one-third of the children in the study displayed proximity maintaining behaviour by six months of age and three-quarters by nine months.

- **Proximity Maintenance**

Attachment theory was advanced by Bowlby built on a foundation of knowledge regarding psychoanalytical and behavioural theories regarding the child's tie to the mother, as well as in relation to findings regarding separation of child from mother by Ainsworth (1963, 1967) and Schaffer and Emerson (1964). Bowlby (1969) states that attachment theory is a 'theory of instinctive behaviour', going on to postulate that the 'child's tie to his mother is a product of the activity of a number of behavioural systems that have proximity to mother as a predictable outcome'. The function of attachment behaviour as proximity maintaining behaviour has been hypothesised by Bowlby as primarily pertaining to survival. Survival may be enhanced by maintaining close proximity with one's mother as a form of protection from predators by not being a solitary figure at an age when vulnerable (Bowlby, 1969).

Bowlby went on to describe a 'dynamic equilibrium' regarding proximity maintenance between an infant and mother (Bowlby, 1969). The 'dynamic equilibrium' is maintained at times by drawing the mother to the infant and at other

times drawing the infant to the mother. The infant signals to the mother in order to maintain the equilibrium by 'crying, smiling, babbling or calling' (Bowlby, 1969) or maintains the equilibrium by approaching or clinging to the mother. The equilibrium can also be maintained by the mother if the infant is seen to be straying too far from the mother or if the mother perceives danger that the infant has failed to recognise. Proximity maintenance as described by attachment theory can therefore be seen to be favoured by natural selection to aid survival.

- **Secure Base**

The fundamental function of the attachment concept can be identified as aiding survival through the mother and infant maintaining close proximity. Attachment theory however goes further acknowledging an important role for a caregiver as providing a 'secure base' (Bowlby, 1988) for the infant. A secure base refers to the caregiver providing an infant with a sense of comfort and safety which allows the infant to explore the world, while providing a 'haven of safety' (Bowlby, 1988) in times of alarm or distress. The function of a secure base is therefore to allow the internalisation of the above secure base behaviours, thereby instilling a sense of safety and reliability.

- **Internal Working Models**

Attachment theory therefore outlines how attachment behaviour aids survival and allows caregivers to instil a sense of safety and comfort for infants. Attachment theory also provides a framework that supports infants to make sense of the world



around them. Bowlby introduced the term 'internal working models' (Bowlby, 1973), which are mental representations of the self and others. These mental representations allow the individual to predict and make sense of the environment around them (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). Sloman *et al.* (2002) noted that internal working models influence how emotions are regulated. Bowlby (1979) believed that internal working models constructed during childhood carry forward to adulthood and influence thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Attachment theory therefore provides a framework to allow infants to begin to make sense of the world, which in turn influences how they function within the world, both interpersonally and personally in terms of emotion regulation.

- **Attachment Categories**

Ainsworth *et al.* (1978) outlined a categorization system of attachment. Disruptions in the infant-child relationship were used to form the basis of a method used to categorize attachment relationships, which became known as the strange situation. The strange situation was based on a laboratory setting with the infant and mother. The infant and mother would then be observed interacting, followed by a separation, followed by the infant and mother being re-united. On the basis of this observation Ainsworth *et al.* (1978) produced the categories: - secure; anxious/ambivalent; avoidant and disorganized to describe the style of attachment relationship.

An adult attachment classification system, the Adult Attachment Inventory (AAI) was developed by Main *et al.* (1985). The AAI is an interview based classification

system that produced the following three categories: - autonomous, preoccupied, and dismissive. It also has a, 'cannot classify category': - disorganised. The categories are in relation to 'a parent's state of mind with respect to attachment' (Hesse, 1999). The AAI therefore reflects an adult's early attachment experiences, which then has implication with regard to how they will function as an attachment figure themselves.

- **Summary**

The foundations of attachment theory have been provided in order to progress the research question regarding determining the role of attachment for young people who have been violent. The literature regarding the potential role of attachment regarding the development of violence will be presented, in relation to a discussion regarding psychopathology. However it is first of all necessary to continue to lay the foundations for this research by providing a possible introduction regarding the role of social rank for young people who have been violent.

## **1.2 Social Rank**

Adolescence is a time when young people experience physiological changes and the beginnings of a shift in terms of the importance of relationships from parents to peers (Irons & Gilbert, 2004). Social rank refers to the position of an individual in a social hierarchy. A social rank framework can therefore be used regarding how young people function within a group. The group could refer to a family group or a group of peers. The origins of social rank can be traced to animals and the 'so-called ranking order' (Lorenz, 2002). Lorenz (2002) described the rule of 'ranking order' as a rule

under which ‘every individual in the society knows which one is stronger and which one is weaker than itself, so that everyone can retreat from the stronger and expect submission from the weaker if they should get in each other’s way’. Lorenz highlighted that the term ‘pecking order’ had originated in relation to ‘ranking order in the domestic fowl’.

The use of threat and rank appraisal, and the selection of a strategy (Fournier *et al.*, 2002) can be used to order individuals within a hierarchy. Individuals assume dominant or submissive positions relative to other members within the hierarchy. Assuming dominant or submissive positions can be seen as a strategy to avoid conflict, with the individuals concerned weighing up the feasibility of winning against an opponent. The dominant stance can be assumed when the threat and rank appraisal identify a good chance of winning if a fight was to take place. A submissive stance may be adopted when threat and rank appraisal identify an opponent as superior in terms of winning a fight.

- **Summary**

Social rank<sup>1</sup> has therefore been described as a system that orders interaction within groups of peers. Having laid out the bare bones of attachment theory and social rank the research question can progress with a discussion regarding affect regulation in an

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<sup>1</sup> The present introduction provides more space for a description of attachment compared with social rank, which is a reflection of the greater volume of literature generated for attachment compared with social rank.

attempt to ascertain the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation of young people who have been violent.

### **1.3 Affect Regulation**

Affect regulation refers to the experiencing, processing and displaying of emotions. Thompson *et al.* (1995) offer the following definition for affect regulation, 'the intrinsic and extrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating and modifying emotional reactions'. Affect regulation has been identified as a key function of both attachment and social rank systems (Sloman *et al.*, 2002).

- **Affect Regulation and Attachment**

The components of attachment theory can be placed within a framework regarding affect regulation. The relationship between attachment and affect regulation has been discussed in close terms by Schore (2003) who 'updates attachment theory by defining it as a regulation theory'. Proximity maintenance, as well as being related to survival can also be identified as an 'innate affect regulation device' (Mikulincer *et al.*, 1990). The 'dynamic equilibrium' described by Bowlby (1969) can be seen to function in relation to the maintenance of affect regulation for both infant and mother. The 'secure base' as provided by the mother can be viewed as a mechanism to ensure affect regulation, particularly in times of alarm or distress. The concept of 'internal working models' as described by Bowlby (1969) can also be viewed within a framework regarding affect regulation, as providing a mechanism for infants to 'develop expectancies...about their parents' availability to fulfil the roles of protector, provider, and emotion regulator (Goldberg *et al.*, 1999). Therefore using

internal working models among the other components of attachment theory infants can be seen to 'learn how to self-regulate and develop strategies for managing increased levels of arousal and regaining a state of organization if they become disorganized' (Scroufe, 1991). Therefore early attachment relationships are able to provide an infant with a sense of comfort and safety and ability to tolerate and contain negative emotions, such as aggression.

The ability for an attachment relationship to provide a sound basis for the development of affect regulation however depends on the attachment experiences of the parents. Parents displaying 'dismissing', 'preoccupied' and 'disorganized' attachment styles have relationships with their infants that in turn produce insecure attachment experiences for the infants. For example parents who have a 'dismissing' style of attachment can instil a sense of rejection to infants, which in turn manifests itself in an 'insecure-avoidant' attachment style for the infant. An 'insecure-avoidant' attachment relationship can result in 'affective neutrality, decreased interest in proximity contact, and active avoidance of the parent' (Cassidy, 1994; Main, 1995). Therefore the ability for an attachment relationship to regulate affect is dependent on the attachment experience of the parent and the style of attachment relationship between the parent and child.

- **Affect Regulation, Attachment and Psychopathology**

Difficulty with affect regulation or affect dysregulation can result in both psychopathology (Allen, 2003) and violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002). Research by Bowlby (1944; 1969; 1973; 1980) and

Robertson and Bowlby (1952) was in relation to disruptions in the infant-child relationship and how such disruptions were 'precursors of later psychopathology' (Cassidy, 1999). Psychopathology can be evident when the components of attachment theory are absent or deficient. A caregiver with a 'dismissing' attachment style may be unable to maintain proximity and to provide a secure base due to increased 'withdrawal from interactions' (Haft & Slade, 1989). The result may therefore be infants who do not feel able to explore the environment around them. Infants can therefore become preoccupied with the availability of their caregiver which restricts their capacity to embark upon the challenges in life. Similarly caregivers who lack a positive sense of self and interpret the environment around them in an unpredictable manner are likely to instil a similar sense of the world to their offspring. Therefore insecure early attachment experiences may result in difficulty with affect regulation, which may in turn result in psychopathology.

The concepts 'mentalization', 'interpersonal interpretative capacity' and 'reflective functioning' can be seen to be related to attachment, affect regulation and psychopathology. Mentalization is the process whereby an infant is able to develop mental representations of psychological states of themselves and others (Fonagy & Target, 2002). The capacity to make representations of mental states has been linked with the ability to self regulate in response to distress, for example (Fonagy & Target, 2002). Interpersonal interpretative capacity (Fonagy, 2003) is the ability to interpret such representations of mental states. Early maltreatment has been linked with a subsequent deficiency regarding the ability to subsequently develop or interpret representations of psychological states (Fonagy & Target, 2002).

Reflective function takes the concepts of mentalization and interpersonal interpretative capacity further and relates to the ability of a person to interpret the behaviour of another in relation to the thoughts, feelings and other experiences of the individual, not necessarily in relation to their relationship (Fonagy, 1998). Reflective functioning therefore allows an individual to interpret the actions of a caregiver in the context of other experiences within the context of the caregiver's life, rather than interpreting all behaviour as a result of their relationship. An infant may therefore interpret a caregiver as being less available due to illness, rather than due to rejection. The ability of an infant to engage in such reflective functioning has been identified as a defence which allows the infant to produce alternative interpretations to rejection from their caregiver.

The capacity to engage in reflective functioning has therefore been identified as a defence mechanism. On the contrary the deconstruction of reflective functioning can also be seen as a defence mechanism in order to defend oneself from the intent or 'wish to harm', from a caregiver. The deconstruction of reflective functioning can be viewed in a similar vein to dissociation, whereby an individual dissociates from negative thoughts, feelings or experiences that are difficult to process. Therefore such experiences are not processed as a means of protection. Individuals that have been exposed to early attachment relationships that have been maladaptive have been identified as having difficulty with the ability to use mentalization and reflective functioning in a constructive manner (Fonagy, 1998).



- **Affect Regulation and Social Rank**

Attachment theory allows the conceptualisation of affect regulation via the attachment relationship and by instilling a positive sense of self in the infant to allow the development of self regulation of affect. McGuire *et al.* (2002) found that, in relation to affect regulation within social rank systems that affect regulation ‘operates at both intra-organismic and inter-organismic levels’. Thereby McGuire *et al.* (2002) are suggesting that within social rank systems individuals manage affect regulation on an individual basis (as within the positive sense of self as described above in relation to attachment) and at a level where the existence of the hierarchy within the social rank system regulate affect. Sloman *et al.* (2002) noted that ‘signals from others influence the receivers’ physiological and psychological states [affect regulation], and individuals seek out environments that facilitate regulation’. McGuire *et al.* (2000) ‘showed that subordinate male vervet monkeys are more likely to be dysregulated than dominant males. Moreover, the observation of submissive displays by subordinate males appears essential for maintaining a regulated state in dominant males’. It is therefore being surmised that both attachment and social rank systems are relevant in the regulation of affect.

- **Affect Regulation and Violence**

Affect regulation has also been linked with violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002). Dankoski *et al.* (2006) found the capacity to regulate affect to be a mediator in relation to attachment and family chaos and violence. Krakowski (2003) noted ‘impulsivity and strong emotional states often



accompany violent acts [and that] aggressive individuals are likely to experience general difficulties with impulse control and emotional regulation. Nestor (2002) stated that 'violence may be understood in terms of four fundamental personality dimensions: 1) impulse control, 2) affect regulation, 3) narcissism, and 4) paranoid cognitive personality style'. Violence may therefore be an act that ensues under certain circumstances for individuals who have difficulty in relation to affect regulation.

#### **1.4 Violence**

Fonagy (2003) noted that violence peaks in the second year of life and that subsequent violence is a failure of normal development processes. It can therefore be hypothesised that early attachment experiences, in particular the development of internal working models contribute to a developmental process whereby infants make sense of the world and are able to regulate affect in order to avoid the need for violence. However should the early attachment experiences be maladaptive, producing insecure attachment experiences it may be that the normal developmental processes are unable to fulfil their function regarding affect regulation. Fonagy (2003) discussed the failure of mentalization, or the failure of the capacity to make mental representations of themselves and others as resulting in violence. Sloman *et al.* (2002) discussed the promoting of affect regulation as one of the main functions of attachment systems, social rank systems and therapy.

## **1.5 Research Question**

The research is of an exploratory nature with the aim of gaining a better understanding regarding why young people are violent. The ability or lack of ability to regulate affect has been associated with violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002). Attachment and social rank have been identified as systems associated with affect regulation (Sloman *et al.*, 2002). The primary research question is therefore to ascertain the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent.

## **2. METHOD**

The method section will outline the research methodology chosen; the ethical procedure and ethical considerations; the research procedure (including recruitment; participants; interviews; analysis; report; and the dissemination of results); and will finish with a discussion regarding considerations related to ensuring quality of research.

### **2.1 Research Methodology**

The research is of an exploratory nature with the aim of gaining a better understanding regarding why young people are violent. The primary research question is to ascertain the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent. In order to begin to provide some answers in relation to the research question a qualitative research methodology appears to construct the most appropriate framework, in order to allow the young people themselves to provide relevant data, rather than to restrict the findings by imposing cause and effect related questions. Qualitative research necessitates an epistemological position, which will be outlined as will grounded theory the qualitative research methodology chosen for the current research.

- **Qualitative Research**

Willig (2001) discusses epistemology as a 'theory of knowledge', involving thinking about the 'nature of knowledge itself'. There are a number of epistemological perspectives. Positivism is an epistemological position that is concerned with a

‘straightforward relationship between the world and our perception, and understanding, of it’ (Willig, 2001). Empiricism is closely linked with positivism, in that it is ‘based on the assumption that our knowledge of the world must be derived from the facts of experience’ (Willig, 2001). Positivism and empiricism are therefore epistemological approaches that suggest a direct relationship between our knowledge of the world and of the world itself. A constructivist epistemology however suggests that our perception of the world influences the knowledge we hold of the world. Willig (2001) notes that a constructivist epistemological approach ‘draws attention to the fact that human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically’ and further states that ‘this does not mean that we can never really know anything; rather, it suggests that there are ‘knowledges’ rather than ‘knowledge’.

The aim of the current research was to take a constructivist epistemological approach, therefore acknowledging the role of the chief researcher in terms of the research process as a whole. The position of this research was more akin to a ‘critical realist’ position and at times a position of ‘naïve realism’ (Madill, *et al.*, 2003). Quantitative research methodology attempts to control variables to allow one specific variable to be measured. Qualitative research attempts to acknowledge variables as essential parts of the research process, while utilising tools to ensure the quality of the research. One of the initial considerations in ensuring quality of research is ensuring the appropriateness of the research methodology utilised. Prior to discussing how quality is ensured in qualitative research methodology the research methodology chosen for the current research, grounded theory will be outlined.

- **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory emerged from the studies of two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss with their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Glaser and Strauss (1965; 1968; Strauss & Glaser, 1970) were studying dying in hospitals, at a time when the subject was rarely discussed. They ‘developed systematic methodological strategies that social scientists could adopt for studying many other topics’ (Charmaz, 2006). The strategies ‘advocated developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories’ (Charmaz, 2006). The defining components of grounded theory include: - simultaneous data collection and analysis; codes and categories from data; constant comparative method; theory development, at each stage of data collection and analysis; memo-writing; sampling toward theory construction; and literature review after analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory has been interpreted differently by different researchers over the years and in fact the founding fathers Glaser and Strauss have subsequently differed with their views regarding grounded theory. Glaser advocates dealing with data in a more rigorous fashion by ‘codifying qualitative research methods’ (Charmaz, 2006), while Strauss emphasises humans as active agents within the research process.

## **2.2 Ethics**

The procedure for gaining ethical approval involved the University of Edinburgh, NHS Research Ethics Committee and NHS Research and Development and took

eleven months. Throughout the ethical process the main ethical considerations were anticipated as being: -

- **Informed consent** - It is important that participants are able to give informed consent. Participants will be informed that the study is to explore the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in order to gain a better understanding of their aggressive behaviour. Participants will therefore be asked to discuss early memories regarding important relationships, current interpersonal relationships and aggressive behaviour. Participation in the study will not proceed until the chief investigator is satisfied that informed consent is achieved, as with routine clinical practice. Participants' questions regarding the research will be answered at any point throughout the process.
  
- **Accessing memories** - It is possible that participants may access painful memories when discussing early attachment experiences, current interpersonal relationships and aggressive behaviour. The chief investigator will be vigilant in terms of recognising distress or increased aggression in the young people. In such an instance the chief investigator would terminate the interview and offer immediate psychological support to the individual. There will be staff available to intervene and support the chief investigator throughout the interviews, as is necessary. There would also be an opportunity for a referral on to an appropriate health care professional. Staff

working with the young people will be aware of the nature of the interviews in order to recognise any need for additional support.

- **Voluntary participation** - I think that it will be important to be clear to participants that participation in the research is voluntary. Participants may not have much control over their environment and as such it should be clear that participation is voluntary.
- **Confidentiality** - The information gathered from interviews will be confidential and anonymous. A code or pseudonym will be used when transcribing interviews and recordings will be destroyed immediately when they have been transcribed.

NHS research and development approval was gained for this research (see appendix 6.1).

## **2.3 Research Procedure**

- **Recruitment**

In order to identify participants for this research the chief investigator met with Community Mental Health Workers from Youth Justice and Edinburgh Connect. Youth Justice are based in the Children and Families Social Work Department within The City of Edinburgh Council and provide a multi agency approach to children and young people who offend or who are at risk of offending. Edinburgh Connect is a

mental health service which works in partnership with residential care staff and foster carers to promote and enhance mental well-being for looked after and accommodated children and young people. The Community Mental Health Workers identified potential young people that they have previously or are currently working with, who have had difficulty with violence. In terms of approaching and recruiting young people the young people were approached by a member of staff that they are currently working with. A member of staff then went on to outline the research, using the participant information sheet (see appendix 2) in order to ascertain if the young person would be interested in taking part. The chief investigator then met the potential participants and if they agreed to take part in the research they went over the information sheet with the young person prior to gaining formal informed consent (see appendix 3), where the young person or parent or guardian signed a consent form, prior to the interviews taking place. Eight young people participated in the present research. One young person declined to take part on meeting with the chief researcher and one young person's parents did not get back in touch with the youth justice worker regarding participation within the research.

- **Participants**

The participants were recruited as outlined above in terms of having difficulty in relation to violence. Violence for the young people ranged from being involved in fights at school with peers, to assaulting members of the public and using weapons such as poles and sticks when involved in violence within a group. The level of violence exhibited generally resulted in the young person who perpetrated the violence as being accommodated within a secure unit. It was important that potential



participants would be able to discuss areas related to the research question, therefore be able to discuss albeit in simple terms: - a violent incident; affect regulation; attachment; and social rank.

- **Inclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria were defined as young people: - age range 12–18 years old; males and females; difficulties with violence, either resulting in criminal charges or impeding quality of life; ability to discuss early memories regarding primary caregiver; young person known to Youth Justice or Edinburgh Connect.

- **Exclusion Criteria**

Exclusion criteria included young people with: - a learning disability; a significant head injury; and/or severe mental health difficulties such that their ability to communicate is impeded.

- **Interviews**

There was no structured interview schedule, as is appropriate for using a grounded theory approach to research. The chief investigator had four broad areas to discuss as related to the primary research question: -

- How have early family relationships been experienced for participants?
- How do participants manage peer relationships?

- Do participants have difficulty with experiencing, processing and displaying emotion?
- What role does aggression play for participants?

Table 1 provides some sample questions as taken from the transcripts of the interviews with the young people and part of a transcript can be seen in appendix 4.

Table 1: Sample Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
<b>Violence</b>	Researcher (R): I guess the first thing I would like you to talk about. Is just maybe if you could think of a time that you have been violent and just sort of talk me through what led up to it and what happened.
	R: Ok, so we have gone through the information sheet. So you have got an idea of some of the things that we are going to be talking about today...
	Young Person (YP): Aye R: ...and if you find any of it a bit difficult just let me know and we can stop. Em, I guess the first thing that would be good for me to know is, you know this research is going to be about trying to find out about why people are violent just to sort of talk to me about a time that you have been violent. Do you feel okay about doing that?
	R: so we've talked about the information sheet you've signed the consent form so you know you know basically what we're going to be talking about today I think the first thing that would be really helpful for me is if we could just .. if you could talk through a time where you've been violent... would that be alright?
<b>Affect</b>	R: How how is it for you when you are upset? Do you, is that okay for you to kind of cope? Or do you find that..
	R: Why, why the getting so angry if someone has told you something like clean your room, why?
	R: So it doesn't feel comfortable to be upset?
<b>Family Relationships</b>	R: We have not talked very much about your Mum. Is it alright if we talk a bit about that?
	YP: Aye
	R: So who who is at home. Is it your Mum and your sister?
	R: How was your Mum throughout all this? You know looking after you just on her own and stuff. How was she?
<b>Peer Relationships</b>	R: How how do the different people in the group get on?
	R: So what about what about in here. What about pals in here. Have you got pals in here?
	R: Em, okay. And how how does the small group work. How does everyone get on in the small group.

The interviews took place within a secure unit or within the Youth Justice Offices.

Prior to the interviews taking place a member of staff working with the young person

was briefed regarding the nature of the issues that were likely to be discussed and the member of staff was available to support the young person after the interview, should support be required. The young people were made aware by the chief investigator that it may be that the topics discussed during the interview would highlight difficult areas in their life and that talking with a member of staff may be helpful. Staff members were available throughout the interview to support the young person or the chief investigator depending on the situation that arose. The chief investigator also had an alarm throughout the interviews. At the end of each interview the chief investigator checked with the young person how they had found the experience and again advised that staff were available for support if necessary. The interviews generally were between half an hour to one hour long and did not exceed one and a half hours.

- **Data Management**

Interviews provided the data for the current research and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Interviews were then transcribed, removing any identifiable characteristics, in a word document on a password protected laptop computer. The transcriptions were then transferred onto a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package (CAQDAS), NVivo 7 (QSR International Pty. Ltd., 1999-2007), to allow assistance with coding. Coding refers to the 'categorising [of] segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data' (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory advocates a constant comparative method regarding coding which relates to consistently comparing codes with previous codes, thereby comparing data with data as the process of data collection continues. Coding

was undertaken in a layered approach as outlined by Charmaz (2006) beginning with initial coding, then focused coding, then axial coding, and culminating in theoretical coding. The layered approach assists with dismantling the data and subsequently supporting the reassembling of the data providing a framework of themes and potentially ultimately theory.

The reassembling of the data within the present research used the following layered approach regarding the naming of the categories (as decided upon by the chief researcher): - primary category; core category; category; sub-category; and further sub-category. The core categories were created from an amalgamation of sub and further sub-categories. The primary category was then created to group three of the four core categories together.

#### ○ **Initial Coding**

Charmaz (2006) offers the following guidelines regarding initial coding: - 'remain open; stay close to the data; keep your codes simple and precise; construct short codes; preserve actions; compare data with data; and move quickly through the data'. Initial coding for the current research followed the guidelines as set by Charmaz (2006). Initial coding can move through the data in a word-by word, line-by-line or incident-to-incident format. The current initial coding was undertaken following a line-by-line format, as recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1998).

- **Focused Coding**

The next phase of coding involved focused coding. Focused 'codes are more directive, selective, and conceptual' (Charmaz, 2006). Focused coding takes place after the initial coding and explains larger pieces of data. The constant comparative method was continued throughout both the initial and focused phases of coding, comparing blocks of data.

- **Axial Coding**

Axial coding was then undertaken. Axial coding involves specifying 'the properties and dimensions of a category' (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding is therefore the beginnings of the process of reconstructing the data, after dismantling the data during the previous phases of coding.

- **Theoretical Coding**

Theoretical coding, as the name suggests is the phase of coding whereby codes, categories and then themes can potentially be integrated into a theory (Charmaz, 2006). The production of a theory is however dependent on achieving what is known as theoretical saturation.

- **Process of Coding**

The current research followed the above process of coding, following initial, focused, axial and theoretical coding. This was achieved using NVIVO. The

transcripts of the interviews with the young people were transported into NVIVO whereby line-by-line coding was undertaken. The line-by-line coding created a long list of codes. This list of codes was gradually refined and reduced as similar codes were grouped together. This process ultimately created a hierarchical organization of categories (see table 5).

- **Theoretical Saturation**

Theoretical saturation refers to when coding produces no new categories, as codes fit in with existing categories or developing themes (Willig, 2001). Willig (2001) however states that full ‘theoretical saturation functions as a goal rather than a reality’. Willig (2001) goes on to state that Glaser & Strauss (1967) ‘draw attention to the way in which grounded theory is always provisional’. Stating that grounded theory is always provisional relates to the ongoing potential for alternative interpretation in terms of comparing data and generating codes, categories and themes. An alternative view may be that grounded theory presents an understanding of the data in a particular point in time, in relation to the ‘independent variables’ that are the researcher and participants.

- **Report**

The process of qualitative research necessitates a shift from the traditional method regarding writing up quantitative research. Quantitative research is generally written after data collection and analysis, with perhaps the exception of the introduction. However qualitative research, as well as the present qualitative research involves

writing throughout the data gathering and analysis phases. It therefore necessitates 'juggling' many demands, while holding central the process of data analysis in terms of the generation of themes and potentially theories. This is a shift for the chief researcher, as a novice qualitative researcher. It is however a welcome shift that allows the chief researcher to be integral to the research process, which feels like a natural development building on research experience.

## **2.4 Ensuring Quality in Qualitative Research**

Several authors have written regarding criteria to ensure quality in qualitative research Henwood & Pidgeon (1992), Elliot *et al.* (1999) and Charmaz (2006). Elliot *et al.* (1999) however acknowledges that there are criteria that relate to both qualitative and quantitative research: - appropriateness of method; clarity of presentation; and contribution to knowledge. The following section will use the above three criteria as a framework to highlight some of the issues regarding ensuring quality in qualitative research.

- **Appropriateness of Method**

Choosing an appropriate research methodology has been identified as important in ensuring quality of research, albeit qualitative or quantitative research. Qualitative research methodology and grounded theory more specifically was chosen for the current research primarily as the current research is of an exploratory nature. Qualitative research methodology allows the development of theory from narratives of psychological processes, provided by the young people themselves. Literature can



then be used to fit models of psychological understanding to the categories that have been developed from the narrative material through the circular process of coding. Qualitative research methodology is therefore appropriate for the current research using the narratives of young people to create theory grounded in data.

The appropriateness or reliability of the research method and the role of the researcher regarding data analysis can be checked through a process known as 'triangulation'. Willig (2001) states that the 'reliability of the analysis can be demonstrated by using triangulation (of researchers and/or methods) to show how different perspectives converge and thus confirm one another's observations and interpretations'. The current research used the method of triangulation whereby one of the chief investigators supervisors coded a section of data to check that similar codes and hence similar themes were reached from the same piece of data.

- **Clarity of Presentation**

Clarity of presentation can be documented through auditability, memo-writing and reflexivity. Auditability is the process whereby the stages of the research process can be identified (Rodgers & Cowles 1993). Memo-writing is the writing of 'informal analytic notes' (Charmaz, 2006). Memos chart the research process, therefore providing auditability, in an informal intuitive manner, with discussions relating to codes, data and emerging categories and themes, see table 2 for an excerpt from a memo regarding violence.

Table 2: Memo - Violence

Violence - was one of the areas that all the young people were happy to discuss, often giving full and graphic descriptions. It was also the opening question. Many of the young people have a good sense of why they had been violent. However there was also a sense from young people that violence was one of a few strategies open to them regarding existing with peers.

The sense of processing was therefore present throughout the interviews in terms of gaining the young people's stories regarding being violent, some very processed and some very raw and existing moment to moment.

Auditability and the role of the researcher are further identified throughout the process of 'reflexivity'. Charmaz (2006) defines reflexivity as follows 'the researcher's scrutiny of his or her research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring the researcher into the process and allow the reader to assess how and to what extent the researcher's interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry. A reflexive stance informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports'. Throughout the process of the current research the researcher has kept a reflective diary documenting thoughts in relation to the research process, the experience of interviewing young people and regarding discussion within supervision, for example, see table 3. Written memos and the reflective diary allow the decisions regarding the research process to be charted. Excerpts of the reflective diary and memos will be included within the results section in an attempt to allow greater auditability of the research.

Table 3: Excerpt from Reflective Diary

- Ownership
  - Although I am a first time qualitative researcher I feel as if I have taken ownership of the research. When I think back to the beginning of the ethics process and how difficult I found conceptualising the research questions, it makes me aware that I have taken ownership of the research. Supervision feels like a process of checking and helping set directions, rather than a process that is driving the research.
- Analysis
  - When categorising free nodes into tree nodes the process of coming up with the first potential group of themes happened quite naturally. There appears a process within qualitative research whereby one minute you feel like you are making great progress and discovering important categories and then the next minute you question the legitimacy of what you are creating. However having spoken to other first time qualitative researchers it is perhaps part of the process.

Elliot *et al.* (1999) also identified coherence and integration as a necessity regarding clarity of presentation, ‘in the shape of a narrative or story, a ‘map’, a framework or underlying structure’. The researcher was therefore mindful regarding maintaining coherence in terms of presenting the analysis. The framework of the analysis relates to themes, sub-themes with examples grounded in the data, which are then supported by excerpts from both reflective diary and memos.

- **Contribution to Knowledge**

Contribution to knowledge was the third criterion that was identified by Elliot *et al.* (1999) as important regarding ensuring quality in both qualitative and quantitative research. Charmaz (2006) addressed criteria for grounded theory research that relates directly to contribution of knowledge with reference to originality and usefulness. Originality and usefulness are concerned with the themes or theories produced as a

result of grounded theory methodology. Originality refers to themes offering new insights, for example (Charmaz, 2006) and usefulness refers to categories or themes that 'offer interpretation that people can use in their everyday worlds' (Charmaz, 2006). It is hoped that categories highlighted within the current research go on to improve the knowledge base and insight regarding why young people are violent.

- **Quality in Grounded Theory**

Charmaz (2006) also highlighted credibility and resonance as important criteria for grounded theory research. Credibility and resonance are related to ensuring that themes and theories produced are accurate in terms of reflecting the subject matter accurately. Credibility is concerned with ensuring that claims made, in terms of themes and theories are grounded in data. Resonance refers to how fully the categories and themes produced reflect the 'fullness of the studied experience' (Charmaz, 2006). It is perhaps not for the researcher to comment regarding credibility and resonance pertaining to the current research, other than to acknowledge that steps were taken in an attempt to evidence credibility and resonance, by using examples from transcripts within the results section that help identify the process between data interpretation and theme development.

## **2.5 Dissemination of Findings**

A summary of the research findings will be available to all participants and to staff at Youth Justice and Edinburgh Connect who were involved in the recruitment process.

The results of the findings will also be presented by the chief investigator to interested parties at the Youth Justice office.

### **3. RESULTS**

The results section will first of all provide participant information before going on to present qualitative findings. Qualitative findings will be presented descriptively in the shape of categories and a tentative model depicting how the categories may be related.

#### **3.1 Participant Information**

Participants were eight young people, four males and four females. The age range of participants was 12 years 5 months to 16 years and 6 months. Six of the young people were in secure accommodation. One of the young people was living at home and had never been in secure accommodation and one young person was living in supported accommodation. All the young people had been involved with Youth Justice Services and/or were in secure accommodation.

Six out of the eight young people had charges against them. Charges include assault; theft; breach of the peace; fire raising and resisting arrest. There was also a great deal of documentation regarding violent behaviour regarding six of the young people. Two of the young people were in secure accommodation as a means of protection due to being vulnerable regarding drug use or potentially suicidal behaviour. All the young people interviewed had incidents of violent behaviour that they were able to discuss during the interviews. Participant information is contained in table 4.

Table 4: Participant Information (N=8)

Young Person 1	Male. Aged 16 years old. Living in secure accommodation. A forensic history including charges related to assault, theft and fire raising.
Young Person 2	Female. Aged 15 years old. Living in secure accommodation. A forensic history including charges related to aggression and drug use.
Young Person 3	Female. Aged 16 years old. Living in supported accommodation. A forensic history including charges of breach of the peace.
Young Person 4	Male. Aged 13 years old. Living at home. A forensic history including a charge related to house breaking.
Young Person 5	Male. Aged 12 years old. Living in supported accommodation. A forensic history including charges related to sexual assault and fire raising. Parents with a history of substance misuse.
Young Person 6	Male. Aged 14 years old. Living in secure accommodation. A forensic history including breach of the peace and resisting arrest.
Young Person 7	Female. Aged 14 years. Living in secure accommodation for her own safety. History of self-harm and an isolated act of violence.
Young Person 8	Female. Aged 14 years. Living in secure accommodation due to concerns regarding drug misuse.

### 3.2 Presentation of Categories

The research is of an exploratory nature with the aim of gaining a better understanding regarding why young people are violent. The primary research question is to ascertain the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent. The analysis of the transcripts from the interviews with the young people produced four core categories, which were further divided into sub-categories. Three of the core categories were proposed to be encompassed by a primary category. The hierarchical organization of all the categories are depicted in table 5.

Table 5: Hierarchical Organization of Categories

Primary Category	Core Category	Category	Sub-Category	Further Sub-Category
<b>Processing</b>	<b>Attachment</b>	Positive Aspects of Relationships	Reliable Relationship	
			Sense of Safety	
		Negative Aspects of Relationships	Unpredictable Relationship	
			Rejection	
			Lack of Trust	
			Physical Abuse	
			Substance Misuse	
			Mum Struggling	
			Struggling Strategies	
			Calmed Down	
	<b>Affect</b>	Managing Affect	Confiding	
			Gaining Control	
			Lack of Affect	
			Uncomfortable with Affect	
		Difficulties with Affect	Affect Overwhelming	
			Lack of Strategies	
			Exhilarating Loss of Control	
		<b>Self</b>	Identity	
			Anxious	
			Low Self-Esteem	
			Own Company	
			Unsettled	
			Dangerous	
		Interpersonal	Group Dynamics	Fighting to Fit in
				Split in Group
			Group Hierarchy	Rules
				Earning Power



	<b>Violence</b>	Components of Fighting
		Reasons for Fighting
		Unplanned Violence
		Depersonalised Violence
		Caught
		Beginnings of Regret
		Drawing the Line
		Gauging Behaviour

The core categories and the primary category will be presented in a descriptive manner. The categories and sub-categories will be supported by excerpts from the young people's transcripts thereby providing evidence of the grounding of the data analysis. The development of a tentative model can be seen in figure 1a and 1b, respectively. Figure 1a shows how initially 'processing' was a core category and how it was related to 'attachment', 'affect', and 'self' prior to it being depicted as a primary category.

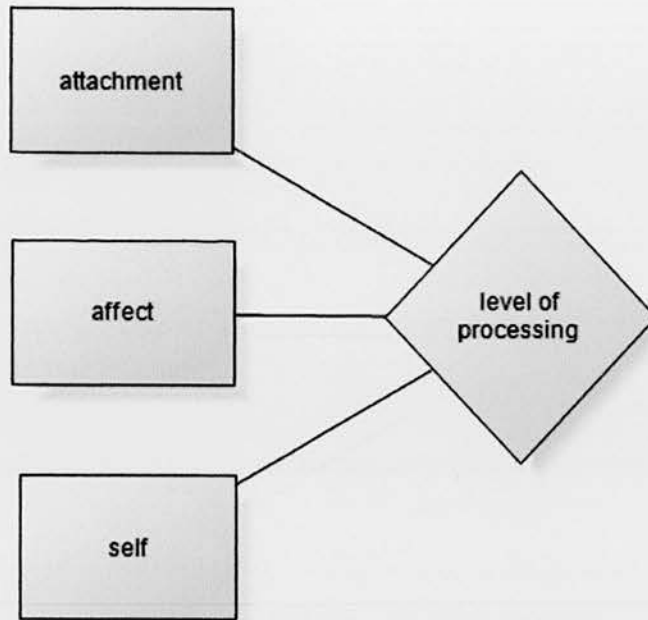


Figure 1a: Beginnings of a tentative model

Subsequently 'processing' was placed as a primary category which encompassed the core categories 'attachment', 'affect', and 'self', see figure 1b. Figure 1b goes on to present a tentative model relating the primary category 'processing' along with the core categories 'attachment'; 'affect'; 'self'; and 'violence'.

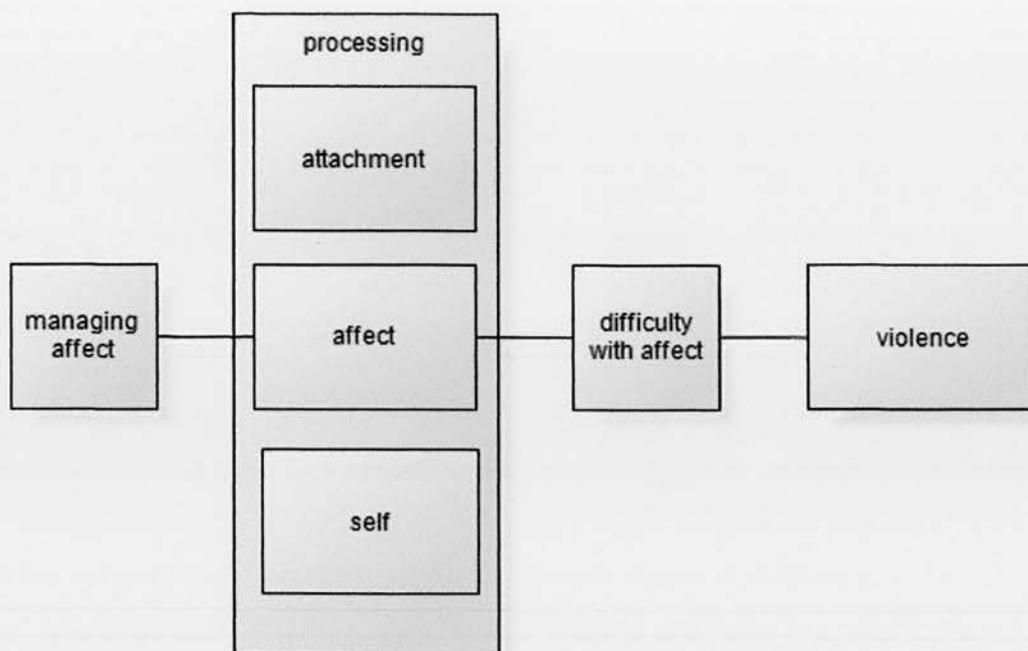


Figure 1: A Tentative Model

- **Core Category: Attachment Relationships**

The core category ‘attachment relationships’ consists of categories ‘positive aspects of relationships’ and ‘negative aspects of relationships’, see figure 2.

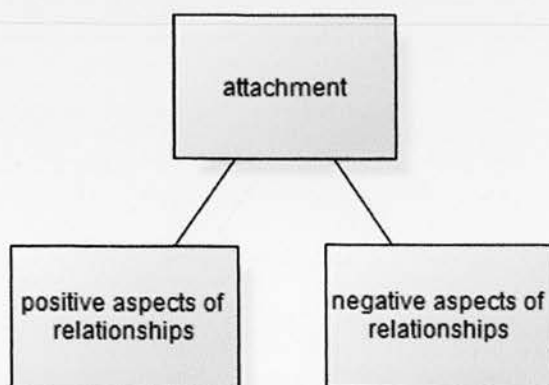


Figure 2: Core Category Attachment and Associated Categories

- **Category: Positive Aspects of Relationships**

The category ‘positive aspects of relationships’, consists of aspects of important relationships that can be viewed as adaptive or helpful and that are related to the quality of the relationship. In the main this category refers to relationships between young people and their parents, most often their mother. However there are also some ‘positive aspects of relationships’ in relation to friendships. The sub-categories within the category ‘positive aspects of relationships’ include ‘reliable relationships’ and ‘sense of safety’, see figure 3. There were also potential sub-categories related to ‘close relationships’ and ‘developed relationships’, which were not felt to be sufficiently developed to be included as sub-categories. The potential sub-category ‘close relationships’ was referring to relationships where a lot of time was spent together or where a confiding relationship was present. The potential sub-category ‘developed relationships’ was pertaining to a shift whereby a parent had initially been unable to provide a secure attachment experience, although had subsequently been a more positive and available parent.

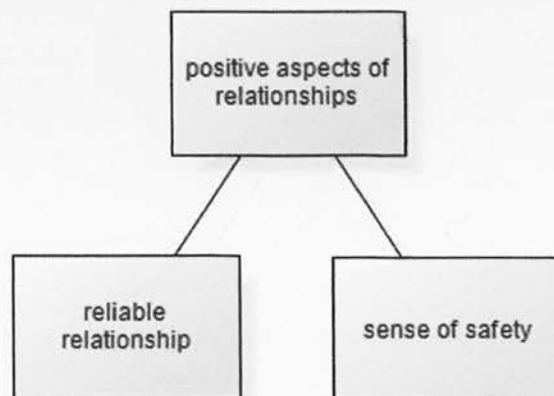


Figure 3: Category Positive Aspects of Relationships and Associated Sub-Categories

### ○ Sub-Category: Reliable Relationships

The sub-category 'reliable relationships' refers to a reliability or stability provided by family members of the young people. The first quotation demonstrates a sense of emotional reliability, whereas the second quotations refer to a more pragmatic reliability, in terms of providing basic care functions. All names within quotations are pseudonyms.

*Young Person (YP1): Em when there was always problems in the house. My Nana would be the one to go to cause I don't know why. But it is my Nana that I have got the best relationship with in the whole of my family.*

*YP2: Like ken just like she would like make sure the tea was always on the table and that the hoose was always clean and all that, ken what I mean.*

### ○ Sub-Category: Sense of Safety

The 'sense of safety' category refers to relationships that provide the young person with a feeling of being protected. The 'sense of safety' was primarily discussed by young people in relation to their mother or family members, however it was also discussed as being provided by friends and by a location when a young person was in secure accommodation, as the quotations below demonstrate:

*YP2: Aye she was good like. She was always. She has probably always been a bit extreme in way in that she has always been like 'Oh I love you and that, and I'll never let anything happen to you and all that'. Cause like her childhood wasnae that nice eh.*

*YP1: we all looked after and protected each each other eh*

*YP1: Aye there was always a member of my family that would look out for me.*

*YP3: we always still stick the same the three of us*

*Researcher (R): Right and you feel, how do you feel being in secure [accommodation]?*

*YP5: Safe*

*R: Hmm hm*

*YP5: But sad because my mum and dad aren't (inaudible)*

*R: You're mum and dad?*

*YP5: My mum and dad aren't here, so.*

*R: Right. So in a way you feel safe but in a way sad.*

*YP1: but the first day I came here I settled in and I have been settled here ever since.*

#### ○ **Category: Negative Aspects of Relationships**

The category 'negative aspects of relationships', refers to factors that are related to impinging on the quality of the relationship. The category is comprised of the following sub-categories: - 'unpredictable relationship'; 'rejection'; 'lack of trust'; 'physical abuse'; 'mum struggling'; and 'substance misuse', see figure 4. Lack of boundaries was also highlighted by one young person within the category 'negative aspects of relationships', however it was not substantiated by any other young people and therefore it was not developed into a sub-category.

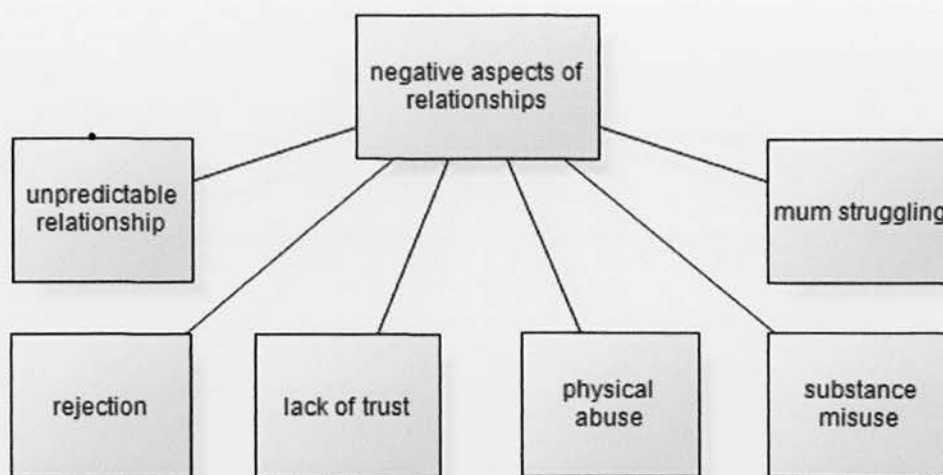


Figure 4: Category Negative Aspects of Relationships and Associated Sub-Categories

○ **Sub-Category: Unpredictable Relationship**

The sub-category ‘unpredictable relationship’ was depicted by examples of young people who found their mother’s behaviour to be erratic. The first couple of examples relate to living with a mother who had a substance misuse problem and the lack of predictability related to living with such a mother. The remaining examples highlight how parents were unable to provide basic care functions for their children. The following quotations provide an insight regarding some young people’s experiences:

*YP2: she didnae ken what she was doing. But she would be alright for a few days and that eh and then she would just...It would all be up in the air or whatever eh.*

*YP2: I don’t..cannae really remember eh. I think that there was a bit of me that just got used to it as well eh. I was. Like I love my Mum to bits but you cannae rely on her, cause that is just how she is*

*R: hmm hm so what kind of things do you think she should have been doing that she didn’t?*

*YP3: getting me up in the morning for school getting me ready ironing my clothes*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP3: taking me to school coming to school plays coming to parents night*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP3: but she never done any of that*

*YP3: and then she moved hoose without me*

*R: right okay so how how was that?*

○ **Sub-Category: Rejection**

The sub-category 'rejection' can be directly illustrated in relation to relationships between young people and their father. However the 'rejection' is more subtle regarding the relationship between young people and their mother, with examples of feeling let down or being abandoned, as the following quotations demonstrate:

*YP1: I was just out of hospital with cancer leukaemia eh. And then my Dad went in with a collapsed lung because of his smoking and em he cheated on my Ma in hospital and eh that was it, he just left. I have still got contact with him in that the now eh and that but because I have learned what he done and em I feel like he rejected me quite a bit. I am thinking that if he wants me to make an effort and go and see him and that he can make an effort and come and see me but. But if I dinnae go see him I dinnae see him at all.*

*YP6: and my dad said that I wasn't to that I couldnae see him*

*YP1: and he thinks that when I go up to the hoose that I am going to see him but I'm no. I am going up to see the bairns. I dinnae want to see him. I couldnae care less about him any more,*

*YP3: but I just didnae really like her cos' I just feel like she's let me down a lot*

*YP2: Eh but she would always just, I dinnae ken, get off her nut and leave me somewhere.*





### ○ Sub-Category: Lack of Trust

The sub-category 'lack of trust' can be seen to depict a lack of trust between the young people and family members, peers and staff, as demonstrated by the following quotations:

*YP4: it was cos' I got em somebody came to my door and says that I took something fae a bike or something it was fae a bike a mudguard band or something*

*R: hmm hmm*

*YP4: and I never took it and I let my mum search me and I never had it*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP4: and then my mum said I was grounded until she got it and I never had it so I got angry*

*YP5: Cause he said every time that I gie you a shot. Like if I gie him a shot of my PS2 like, he says 'oh aye I will always gie you a shot of my x-box and that'. And Every time I ask for a shot of it he says nut.*

*YP2: Cause well there is always like the politics or whatever cause like obviously like, say I have gone with one of laddies or whatever then that, there is going to be a bit of friction because there is going to be like. And you never ken with all the drugs as well who is going to rip you off who's no going to. Ken what I mean. Cause there was like me and my pal Chantelle, we call each other sisters and we are like that (sign – fingers crossed) but I wouldnae leave my jacket with all my money in it in her hoose eh.*

*YP1: So if felt like the staff were just, they wereny right, it felt like they were just picking on me sort of thing, bullying me eh, so em. And I explained to the staff eh up at unit that I wasnae happy there, that I didnae want to be there*

### ○ Sub-Category: Physical Abuse

The sub-category 'physical abuse' was in relation to 'physical abuse' experienced by young people and their siblings directed from their mother. The quotations below demonstrate the methods and some reasons for the violence:

*YP3: she's hit us with belts, slippers like the bottom of slippers*

YP3: *she's really big eh and she started battering me*

YP3: *like I didnae know one time she battered my brother Kevin because he gave her cold toast*

YP7: *and my mum was like dinnae swear so I swore at her cos' I was in that much of a pee'd off mood*

R: *right*

YP7: *and then she slapped me and that's how the police officer tried to (unclear)*

R: *right*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Mum Struggling**

The sub-category 'mum struggling' incorporates examples from young people regarding their mother exhibiting low mood, being vulnerable and using alcohol as a coping mechanism, as can be seen in the following quotations:

YP3: *so eh like my mum she never used to do anything at all .. like she never even really used to speak to us*

YP3: *aye my mum stopped like ... it was my big brother Kevin he was ten at the time eh so like he like kind of took over and started looking after me and my brother eh Stuart because my mum just wouldnae like get out her bed she was cos' she was depressed and that*

YP2: *Cause I always had this thing and I though 'Nut, I am no leaving her'. Ken I needed to make sure she was alright*

YP2: *Cause my Ma could come and see me and she could be all skinny and all dirty and just look like a pure junky eh*

YP8: *I think she just coped she started drinking*

YP8: *like my mum I was worried about my mum just cos I thought she was going to like I thought I was going to cause her to have a heart attack*

*R: right*

*YP8: she was having panic attacks and everything*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Substance Misuse**

The sub-category 'substance misuse' can be seen to follow on or overlap with the previous sub-category 'mum struggling' whereby young people described the use of alcohol and drugs by their mother. The following quotations describe the use of alcohol by the father of a young person and the interaction between the parents of a young person regarding drugs:

*YP1: He got drunk one night and was running up and down the hall with a knife in his hand eh. And I picked up the phone. Phoned my Mum and he threatened to stab me and smash a bottle over my head, if I didnae put the phone down eh. And eh*

*YP2: And then he came doon, but he came doon with like a tub of a thousand valium and that eh and gave half of them to my Ma so.*

#### ○ **Summary**

The core category 'attachment' has been outlined by presenting quotations directly from young people regarding 'positive' and 'negative aspects of relationships'. The analysis also provided a number of points that did not fit directly into a category or sub-category, although feel relevant. First of all there were a number of young people who were uncomfortable to discuss any aspect of attachment relationships. Secondly all the young people had parents who were separated. Thirdly 'contact' was a potential sub-category with the main content being related to little contact between many of the young people and their fathers. The role of 'attachment' as identified in

the tentative model (figure 1) can begin to be placed in context with the presentation of the remaining core categories.

- **Core Category: Affect**

The core category, 'affect' consists of the sub-categories 'managing affect' and 'difficulties with affect', see figure 5. 'Affect' as discussed by the young people generally related to anger, although some of the young people were able to discuss their experiences of being upset. A memo regarding the thought process of the development of the category affect can be seen in table 6.

Table 6: Memo - Affect

Affect - may seem an over simplistic category and it may need to be refined. However it feels as if it fits the categories that it is comprised of. Thinking to producing a visual model, it would be necessary to visually present the two sub-categories, 'managing affect' and 'difficulty with affect', for it to be meaningful.
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The core category 'affect' can be seen to fit into the tentative model (figure 1) holding a central position, in terms contributing to both level of 'processing' and violence.

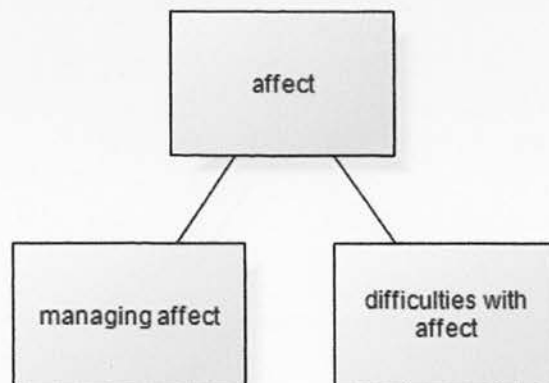


Figure 5: Core Category Affect and Associated Categories

- **Category: Managing Affect**

The sub-category ‘managing affect’ is in relation to examples where young people have demonstrated an ability to manage the experience of emotions, as noted above generally anger. The sub-category ‘managing affect’ is comprised of the following sub-categories: - ‘strategies’; ‘calmed down’; ‘confiding’; and ‘gaining control’, see figure 6. A potential sub-category ‘no problem’ referred to a young person who stated that he had ‘no problem’ in relation to regulating feelings of anger and sadness. This potential sub-category was however not substantiated by any of the other young people.

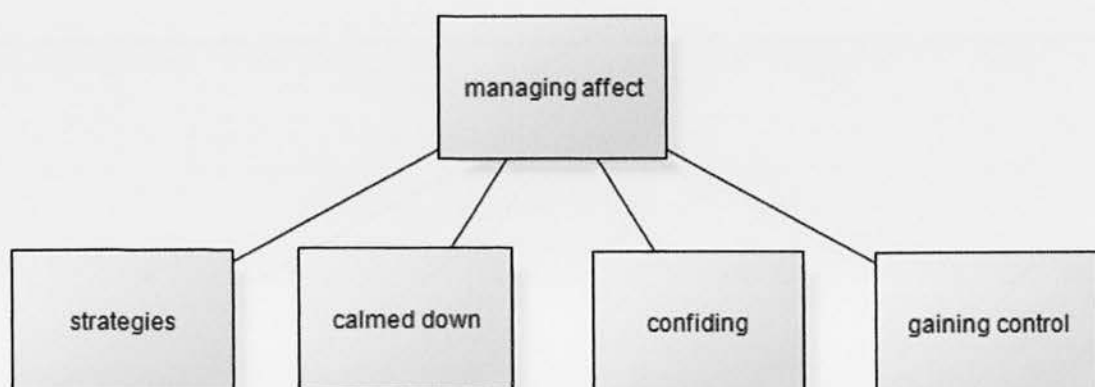


Figure 6: Category Managing Affect and Associated Sub-Categories

- **Sub-Category: Strategy**

In order to ‘manage affect’ many of the young people described having a ‘strategy’. The young people described strategies that they used in relation to anger management, with one young person giving an example regarding how she used a ‘strategy’ to manage feelings of sadness. The following quotations outline some of the ‘strategies’ used by the young people:

*YP3: I feel better like like if I was to punch a hole in the wall or something and the more it would hurt my hand then the more I would feel like I'd it's all coming out*

*YP1: I would take my mattress of my bed. I would put it up against the door and I would just hammer it and ken just get all the tension out and then it is not causing anybody any harm or anything like that. And put you mattress back and by the time you have done that you have not got any energy to start anything*

*YP1: But if there more upsetness there eh I just greet. I just let it out. No matter what age you are, if you are a laddy or a lassie em crying is the best way for sadness to get oot. Eh I mean it is alright to cry eh. Some people are like 'ha you are pure greeting eh you are a wee this that and the next thing'. But you are thinking, if you greet that is everything going oot. After a good cry you are back to normal, you are fine*

*YP7: I can take it out by doing sports though*

*R: okay okay how did you discover that?*

*YP7: just running*

*YP4: em just walk away when situation's starting*

*YP7: try and cheer myself up with stupid stuff like I've got a luminous pink hat that I would put on somebody just to cheer myself up or something like that*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Calmed Down**

The sub-category 'calmed down' referred to methods young people experienced in order to manage anger provoking situations. One young person noted that she was no longer as angry as she had been previously while other examples involved a second party attempting to help a young person 'calm down', be it a family member or a member of staff. Attachment relationships and more specifically internal working models may be related to the method a young person uses to 'calm down'. It may be that a second party is needed to help the young people 'calm down' due to internal

working models being insufficient in the demonstration of affect regulation.

Quotations are as follows:

*YP2: And I have calmed down a wee bit now*

*YP4: and then my uncle John's friend came and then he took me out in his car for an ice cream to calm me down*

*YP1: so but then em a member of staff got me outside eh and eh managed to calm me down*

*R:so staff, staff managed to kind of calm you down. What did they do to calm you down?*

*YP1: They would just stand talking to me. Saying it is not worth it and all that eh, you don't want to go to jail for this wee lassie and everything because eh ehh. She didnae treat me as well as I treated her eh so*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Confiding**

The sub-category 'confiding' was in relation to young people 'managing affect' by feeling able to talk to a family member or peer regarding feeling upset or angry, see the quotations below. There were not many examples given by the young people regarding 'confiding' in their mother. Early attachment experiences may be linked to the ability of a young person to use their mother as someone to confide in. Interestingly the two young people who state that they were able to talk to their mother were reluctant to discuss early attachment experiences or gave little information. There may have been expected to be a link between young people describing 'positive aspects of relationships' in relation to the quality of relationship with their mother and the ability to use their mother as someone to confide in.

*YP4: I'm fine about talking to my mum about stuff*



YP4: *hmm if I was really upset then I'd come down and tell my mum*

YP8: *and I can talk to my mum like see now I can talk to my mum*

YP1: *But she is so mature for her age it is unbelievable. So usually when I am angry or upset or that I am like 'Hannah can I have a word with you outside?'. So we just say aye 'we are just going for a fag eh'. All the people are like 'oh can I come, can I come?'. And I am like 'nut just bolt it is just me and Hannah'. And then all like that 'you two are lovers and that eh', and I am like 'no we are no eh, she is just a really nice lassie to talk to she understands everything. We sit on the step and have a fag and I tell her what I am thinking, what I am going through and everything and she is like 'well just do this', 'just ignore them', 'get on with your life', 'and do this', 'if she is upsetting you forget about it, or change it' or something like that eh. By the time the talk is over, plus you have had a fag eh and it keeps the stress down, you are totally calm. And then you come back in, take a few deep breaths and you are sorted.*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Gaining Control**

The young people who demonstrated 'gaining control' were generally doing so in relation to managing their experience of anger. However some of the young people could be seen to be 'gaining control' in a wider sense as can be seen in the quotations below. The sub-category 'gaining control' can be seen to be an important concept in terms of the young people 'processing' life experiences, which is depicted in the tentative model (figure 1b).

YP7: *yeah I'm usually quite good at managing it [anger]*

R: *so what what do you do what goes through your mind to manage it?*

YP7: *but its its just usually been me saying to myself right if you dinnae walk away you're going to do something stupid so I'm just like no because I cannae lose anything in here I cannae so*

R: *so your thinking about your kind of progress and so you don't want to lose anything*

YP2: *I think that I have got that a bit mare under control. I am still violent but it is like a choice now. Whereas I think back then it was just like, I didnae ken what I was*



doing and then I would be two hours later and I would be like and I would be there myself or something and be like oh maybe that wasnae the wisest thing to do.

YP1: Ken. On one hand you have got like, your life is a bit dodgy at the minute, you know what I mean. You have lost family contact, you are stuck in a unit all day and if you are stuck in a unit all day there is absolutely nothing to do. I was so bored out of my heid that I ended up getting cabin fever and I said that if I spend one one day in here I am going to crack up, so and then em you are trying to get your life on track. And it is stressful cause sometimes eh you go for like a wee job interview eh and they kb [knock back] you as soon as you say that em em so they are like where do you stay. You say address of unit and they are like eh is that a hoose and you say no it is a unit. They are like ehh we will give you a call. And they never do eh so you are thinking oh god em so

#### ○ **Category: Difficulty with Affect**

The analysis of the narratives highlighted that some of the young people reported ‘difficulty with affect’. The category ‘difficulty with affect’ consisted of the sub-categories ‘lack of affect’; ‘uncomfortable with affect’; ‘affect overwhelming’; ‘lack of strategies’; and ‘exhilarating loss of control’ see figure 7. This category fits in the tentative model (figure 1) by directly linking the primary category ‘processing’ with ‘violence’.

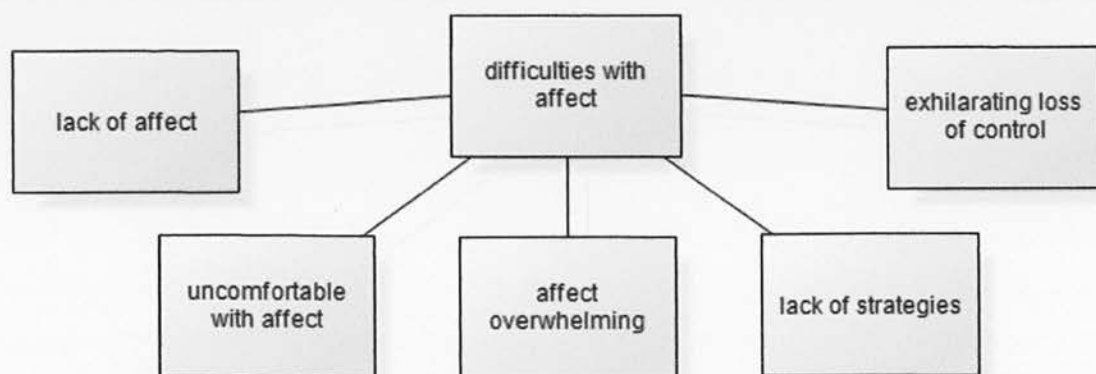


Figure 7: Category Difficulties with Affect and Associated Sub-Categories

- **Sub-Category: Lack of Affect**

The sub-category 'lack of affect' consisted of examples given by the young people highlighting a lack of emotion or a lack of thought regarding emotions. Also some of the young people did not discuss emotions, stating that they had no problem with emotion. The following quotations encapsulate the 'lack of affect' displayed by the young people interviewed:

*YP6: what's the point what the point of looking in the past when you've got the future to think about ... ..*

*R: okay does it feel difficult to look back on things?*

*YP6: no I just dinnae want to do it*

*R: hm hmm so do you maybe then more live in the moment then rather than thinking of what's happened before or what's happened what's going to happen*

*YP6: aye*

*R: more sort of day to day*

*YP6: live your life and if you die you die*

*YP3: I just didnae sometimes I didnae even think I've feelings left cos' I just .. sometimes cos' someone could just ask me how I'm feeling but I widnae be able to tell you*

*R: don't know maybe I'm just thinking sometimes if people are angry a lot or have difficulty controlling that sometimes other emotions they struggle with as well .. do you think you struggle with other emotions or do you think you're okay with them?*

*YP4: I'm okay with them*

- **Sub-Category: Uncomfortable with Affect**

The sub-category 'uncomfortable with affect' reflects difficulties the young people described regarding managing situations that led them to feel angry or upset. The young people provide examples that highlight a lack of strategies regarding managing affect. It appears as if the young people do not know how to tolerate or

manage negative emotion. The young people provided numerous examples regarding being 'uncomfortable with affect', as the quotations below demonstrate:

*R: What about if you are not angry, you are just sad, upset that kind of thing. How how can you manage that?*

*YP2: See I turn that into anger as well. Cause I dinnae really ken what to do, cause like I am no one of these people that is like, sits there or greets or that. Cause I just dinnae like doin that eh like. And a lot of the time as well, like if it is just something wee like I have fell out with my Ma or something. I'll just, I'll just pretend it doesnae bother me. Either that or I will just blow it right up and I will just make it a big massive deal, so that I can turn it into a fight and then I can shout and scream and that.*

*R: So it doesn't feel comfortable to be upset?*

*YP2: Nut*

*R: what about if you're angry how do you how do you deal with that?*

*YP3: I can I I cannae deal with.. I just start greeting and then my face goes beaming and then I always just do that and then I just end up hitting someone or something or just chuck stuff about*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP3: and just go mental*

*YP3: hmm and then I start thinking and it just builds up and up*

*R: hmm hm hmm hm*

*YP3: and then I just keep it all inside and then until I just go wild*

*YP8: and I hate thinking I just feel like when I'm in that state I just feel lonely*

*R: right*

*YP8: and I just feel like I need somebody there*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Affect Overwhelming**

The young people also discussed 'difficulties with affect' in terms of describing finding affect 'overwhelming', in relation to understanding and managing their experience of anger. One young person also talked about her experience of self harming. The following quotations highlight some of the experiences young people had in terms of finding 'affect overwhelming':

YP2: *It [anger] causes me problems like definitely like cause like in here I have no been restrained since September, October, so it has been a wee while eh. But it is like, just in general it sort of takes over everything. Ken what I mean it takes over my full day. And it will just. It might just be something stupid or I might have just woke up like that and I dinnae ken what it is for. But it is no like I can just sweep it to one side eh. It is like when I am really angry that is it.*

R: *So is it there all the time?*

YP2: *Aye. I think it is there. Like say I am just sitting like this and it is there anyway and I know that within seconds I could just go boom. You know zero to sixty, but when I am really angry it is different cause it is like. It just takes over totally and there is nothing that I can do. And it is like, I can just feel it. I can physically feel it and I don't know how to because it is just there and there is nothing I can do to take it away.*

YP8: *ken but then if I'm just sitting there and I'm I'm absolutely raging I would shake and then that's when I couldnae stop it and I know that when I shake but ...*

YP8: *I cannae I just cry I just have to I cannae stop it I just ...*

YP7: *it [self harming] made me feel actually quite good but then it's after always about an hour it would make me feel like crap again and I just went into a vicious circle so*

R: *okay*

YP7: *I've kinda stopped doing it*

R: *what about when you're when you were cutting and self harm what kind of emotions were around then*

YP7: *just a mixture sometimes I would be like really pee'd off and*

R: *hmm*

YP7: *sad at the same time something like that it would always be a mixture cos half (unclear) it was like I'm no feeling that I didnae understand most of it*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Lack of Strategies**

The sub-category 'lack of strategies' relates to young people displaying 'difficulties with affect', while also demonstrating a vulnerability in terms of methods to manage experiences in their life. The following quotations are taken from transcripts of the interviews with the young people:

YP7: *and I punched my wall and I just I just wanted to take my take some anger out but it never helped and then I was sitting listening to staff trying to cover my ears and that trying to ignore them but*

YP3: *and then even when I get caught I still didnae care I would still go back out and do it again*

R: *hmm hm*

Y3P: *cos' I just didnae care*

R: *hmm hm hmm hm*

Y3P: *any more I've just came to a point like in my life when I just didnae care what happens I didnae think about the consequences I didnae care about consequences I just came to a point in my life when I've just*

R: *hmm*

YP3: *didnae want to I just didnae care*

R: *hmm hm hmm hm*

YP8: *I wasn't eating or anything when I was coming in here*

R: *sitting on [in a dangerous place] ... what what was going on there?*

YP7: *just there was too many things going on in my head and I couldnae make sense of them and I was just like wow the best place to sit the now sat there .. it wisnae the best place*

YP3: *that's ... I didnae know I just feel that's what my life is all about just getting in Trouble*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Exhilarating Loss of Control**

The sub-category 'exhilarating lack of control' consists of examples of young people losing control, generally in relation to perpetrating violence, see the quotations below. The term 'exhilarating' is to provide a sense of the adrenalin rush that was described by many of the young people when they were involved in violence. This sub-category can be seen to tie in closely with the core category 'violence', it could therefore be argued that this sub-category should fall under the 'violence' core

category, however the main theme from it is in relation to losing control which should be under the category 'affect'.

*YP1: I don't know it was a sort of adrenalin rush or something eh and you are thinking right eh everybody is doing what I say. I've got this piece of glass in my hand, I ken I shouldnae but now that I have everyone is doing what I do. So I ran*

*YP3: well I didnae ken what was .. when I was running down the stairs I was like eh ken when you get like the wee like adrenalin feeling*

*YP2: Just like I was buzzing. And then it took me a wee while to like I don't know. I just had to go and get like mare drunk and mare out my face as well cause it sort of like woke me up a bit, ken what I mean.*

*YP1: apart from the fact that I was buzzing from 24 pro plus, so I didn't really know what I was doing eh I was kind of away with it,*

*YP2: You just get that caught up in the moment*

*YP6: I just cannae help myself*

*R: so how did you feel when your pals started doing that*

*YP7: I just felt all angry ken like see like I lose control when I go angry*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP7: and I just forget and I just started joining in*

### ○ **Summary**

The core category 'affect' has been presented as consisting of the sub-categories 'managing affect' and 'difficulties with affect'. Quotations have been taken directly from the narratives of the young people to provide examples regarding situations when the young people have been either upset or angry, depicting how they have experienced and managed such situations. The tentative model (figure 1) demonstrated pictorially how 'affect' contributes to the creation of the primary

category ‘processing’ and ultimately how it has a mediating role between the primary category and the category ‘violence’.

- **Core Category: Self**

The third core category has been titled ‘self’. It encapsulates how the young people view themselves, how they believe they are viewed by others and gives some idea regarding interpersonal functioning. The core category ‘self’ consists of the categories ‘sense of self’, and ‘interpersonal’, as can be depicted in figure 8, with the sub-category ‘interpersonal’ being further sub-divided into ‘group dynamics’ and ‘group hierarchy’.

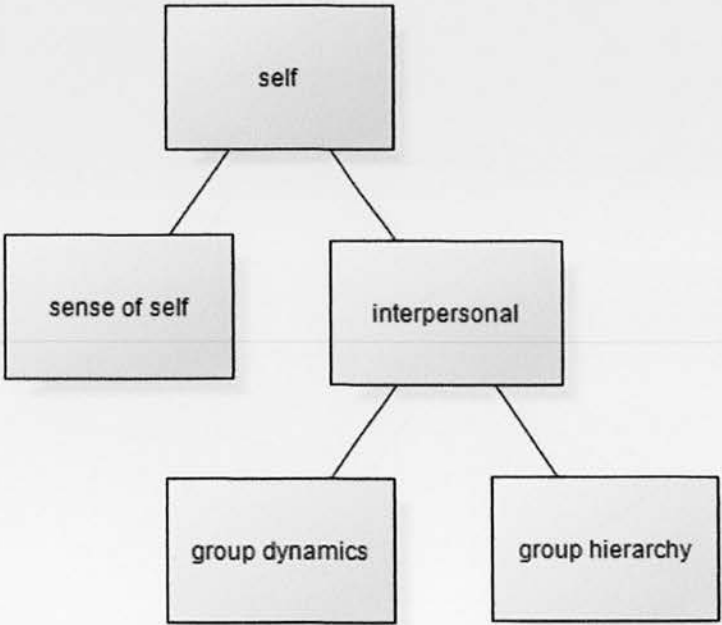


Figure 8: Core Category Self and Associated Categories and Sub-Categories



### ○ **Category: Sense of Self**

The narratives produced by the young people were able to provide an insight regarding how the young people viewed themselves as well as how they thought that they were seen by other people. This 'sense of self' can be further categorised into the following sub-categories: - 'identity', 'anxious'; 'low self-esteem'; 'own company'; 'unsettled'; 'dangerous', see figure 9.

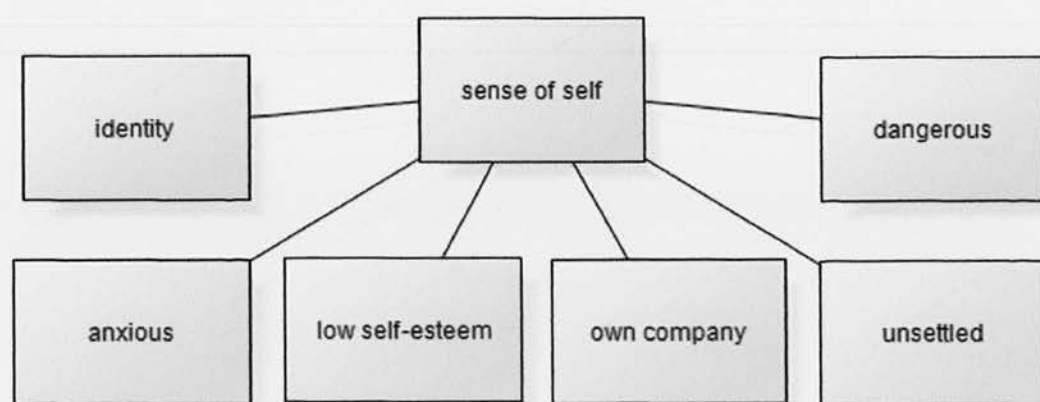


Figure 9: Category Sense of Self and Associated Sub-Categories

### ○ **Sub-Category: Identity**

A number of the young people viewed the creation and maintenance of their 'identity' as important. The first couple of examples are in relation to a young person forging her own identity within the community that she occupies. The remaining examples highlight how the young people shape their behaviour in relation to their 'identity'. The quotations below demonstrate how the young people view their 'identity' in relation to how other people view them.



YP2: Cause I used to quite like. Cause my Mum had taught me like all the sort of, like how to speak to people and that and how to so. I would always go into, like even if it was like big dealers hooses and all that and be like 'Hiya, nice to meet you and all that'. And they would just think that I was dead cute and that eh.

YP2: With me it is liked I worked really hard for that not to happen. Cause I dinnae want anyone treating me like a dafty. So and that's paid off cause then everybody is sort of in for me.

R: Okay. So what have you done to work hard?

YP2: (Laughing). There was just. Just everything basically eh. I have just sort of eh. Just mostly being like being in. Or like ken if people need help or that, like money wise I will help them oot or just. Ken and I have never grassed on anybody for nothing in my life so. All of that sort of works in my favour, a bit.

YP7: felt half half of me just wanted to like kill everybody in sight and then the other half was like no cos' I'm not like that

YP5: I am the leader.

R: You are the leader, in what way?

YP5: Like in a good way and I will say that I will always be the leader.

R: Right.

#### ○ Sub-Category: Anxious

A number of the young people identified themselves as being 'anxious', as the following quotations demonstrate:

YP2: In like I have thought aboot it and I do genuinely just give myself stuff to worry aboot. Cause like the now is a perfect example eh. Cause everything is going really well for me, but I will always find something, even just a really small thing that I will turn into a really big thing and I will worry about it. I'll go over it and over it and it is just, I don't know. It is like I have got used to doing that with big stuff. So when the big stuff is away it is like right there is something I could worry about that all day.

YP2: I can relax in the sense that I can just sit. But I cannae really concentrate, ken what I mean. I will maybe relax for a couple of seconds and then I will be like 'right what else'. And that comes across as quite hyper.

YP7: em I suppose it is cos' it's like that now as well being hyper and then calm down

*R: hm hmm hm hmm and do you feel that you're do you feel because you're not on them do you feel a bit anxious or a bit worried or or not so much?*

*YP8: not so much*

*R: not so much so you're saying you wanted they helped you feel chilled*

*YP8: aye*

*R: did you not feel chilled before?*

*YP8: hmm nope no really*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Low Self-Esteem**

The sub-category 'low self-esteem' highlights how some young people felt about themselves and methods with which they attempted to improve how they felt, as the following quotations show:

*YP3: aye cos' I dinnae I I dinnae really I dinnae really ever feel good*

*R: hmm hm hmm hm is getting in trouble basically and especially not getting caught that makes you feel good*

*YP3: hmm hm*

*R: so in a way then you're going to keep doing it unless you can find another way to feel good*

*YP3: aye*

*YP7: basically virtually begged me to come down [from dangerous place] it was like wow loads and loads*

*R: right did that feel like quite a lot to take in good way or a bad way or?*

*YP7: in a good way*

*R: in a good way .. so why do you think they all came?*

*YP7: at that point I wisnae really (unclear) I suppose if I jumped like they would have they would have probably missed me supposedly*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Own Company**

A number of the young people highlighted how they felt with regards their 'own company'. There were differences among young people regarding preferring to be on

their own or preferring to be with other people, as can be seen within the following quotations:

*YP8: aye I didnae want to be left in my room I just wanted somebody to sit there and be with me like I didnae want them to talk or that I just wanted somebody to be with me*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP8: but they've got to let me reflect like be in my room myself*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP8: hated it*

*R: hm hmm why don't you like being in your room yourself?*

*YP8: too much time to think*

*R: right*

*YP8: and I hate thinking I just feel like when I'm in that state I just feel lonely*

*R: right*

*YP8: and I just feel like I need somebody there*

*YP8: and then like walked away and I could hear them walking away and I was shouting through my door come back please dinnae leave me*

*R: hm hmm hm hmm so you don't like being on your own and not doing anything then?*

*YP2: yeah I've got to be on my own and doing something*

*R: doing something hm hmm so what what would you feel if you were on your own and not doing anything?*

*YP2: I'd start pacing I would be like no I need to get out*

*YP7: I just like being on my own I don't know whereas*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP7: it's just I prefer that*

*R: hm hmm how how do you feel when you're on your own?*

*YP7: well its taken up by doing stuff or I'm watching the soaps*

#### ○ Sub-Category: Unsettled

A further insight into the 'sense of self' of the young people interviewed can be attained by viewing quotations regarding how 'unsettled' some of the young people reported being. The quotations below demonstrate both an emotional sense of being

‘unsettled’ as well as a practical sense in relation to a location, being in secure accommodation, for example. The concept of being unsettled may be related to a lack of a secure base, in terms of early attachment experiences. This sub-category may therefore also fit within the core category ‘attachment’ in terms of ‘negative aspects of relationships’. It may be that early attachment relationships have led to the young people feeling unsettled throughout their childhood and adolescence.

*YP2: she didnae ken what she was doing. But she would be alright for a few days and that eh and then she would just...It would all be up in the air or whatever eh.*

*R: Em okay. So staying with your Granddad, you still wanted to get back to your Mum’s but she was a bit chaotic.*

*YP3: and like after I had ran away from my mums for like twelve weeks*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP3: and went back like I never like ran away but I did I refused to go hame and all of that and then my mum didnae .. my mum wisnae rally bothered anyway*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP1: but as soon as I walked through those doors and that eh I couldnae settle in [unit] at all.*

*YP1: Na, well I went back to unit eh, cause I had the choice of going in another unit but I thought em nut. I cannae be bothered with this whole settling in meeting new people.*

*R: Yeah*

*YP1: and all this sort of stuff eh so I just stayed with the people that I kent and eh I was like. To me everybody in unit was a bam basically.*

*R: So you didn’t feel settled there*

*YP1: Nut*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Dangerous**

There was evidence from the interviews with the young people that some of them viewed themselves or believed others to perceive them as being ‘dangerous’, as can be seen in the quotations below. The sub-category ‘dangerous’ appears to link

closely with the core category 'violence'. However it remains placed within the 'self' core category as it reflects one sense in relation to how they view themselves and how they see themselves as being viewed by others.

*YP1: Uh ha. So I eh ran up to him and I said back off back off and that eh. I ran up to the other member of staff, that was a lassie, there was two female members of staff one was called Lesley and one called Shona. Eh and em because I felt powerful and all that and nae body would mess with me because I have got this bit of glass eh. I can still remember the exact words I said to them. I was like get off Sarah or*

*R: So as you say you have done the anger management stuff, you are em, you can think a bit more about it. Em em how has that helped? Has it helped?*

*YP2: It's no really cause like people say to me. Like social worker says to me all the time, 'oh you are a lot better'. But I am no. I am no, I can control it better. But I think that is mare dangerous. But I now cause it is like I know that I have still got the potential to do it so. I think knowing as much about my self as I do now cause I have done all that work. Probably isn't a good thing. Cause it is like. I know how to use that and I know how to manipulate situations and all that. And I just think that it is a lot easier for somebody who is just a rag, to sort that oot, cause you just stop being rag but what happens when it is like. Well I am violent but I can hide being violent and I can have people thinking this and then I can make them think this and then I can hurt them this way.*

#### ○ **Category : Interpersonal**

The interviews with the young people provided an insight regarding how they manage interaction with peers this category has been labelled 'interpersonal'. The category 'interpersonal' is divided into the sub-categories 'group dynamics' and 'group hierarchy', as has been shown within the core category self above in figure 8.

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Group Dynamics**

The sub-category 'group dynamics' refers to some aspects regarding how the young people interviewed experience being part of a group with peers. This sub-category

consists of further sub-categories, 'fighting to fit in', and 'split in group', as can be depicted in figure 10.

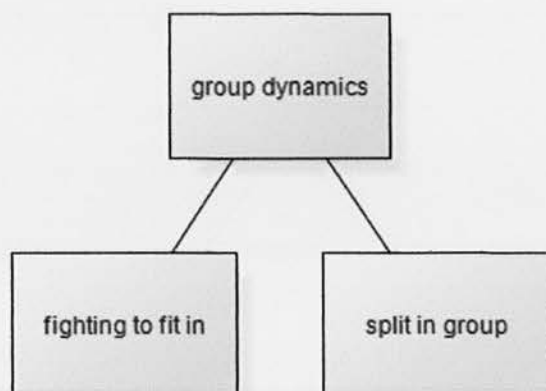


Figure 10: Sub-Category Group Dynamics and Associated Further Sub-Categories

○ **Further Sub-Category: Fighting to Fit In**

Throughout the interviews in the context of the young people describing their experience of violence the sub-category 'fighting to fit in' can be seen to be developed. A number of the young people talked about becoming involved in violence that their friends had reportedly perpetrated, as can be seen in the quotations below. This sub-category was accommodated within the 'group dynamics' category rather than the 'violence' core category as it reflects the importance fitting in with peers has to these young people.

*YP5: and obviously if some one wants [an ally in] a fight they have got to say aye aye aye, so I said aye .....*

*YP5: No good, because they are my pals and I wouldnae let them down, so.*

*R: Okay. So feel like if you didn't say aye that you would be letting them down*

*YP: Hmm hm*



*YP1: They two were battering her. And I am standing there thinking oh nut I cannae watch this and then I thought well I dinnae want to seem like a pure like ken a wee pussy or something in front of girlfriend*

*YP1: Pitch black aye 16 year old vulnerable wee lassie and we battered her and I joined in in all. I didn't actually like assault her I just, I lifted her up and put her on a lock while the other two battered her. I intended to hit her but em hit the grass next to her just to scare her eh.*

*R: So what what led you kind of into the battering as well then?*

*YP2: Just because, ken what I mean my Pal was fighting her and I wanted to be in.*

#### ○ Further Sub-Category: Split in Group

Many of the young people provided rich narratives regarding 'group dynamics' within the secure units. It was common among the young people for there to be a 'split in [the] group' within the secure units, as can be seen from the following quotations:

*YP1: Well Hannah, Spencer and Alistair I am alright with them and eh we are all right eh, we look out for each other. Someone else is starting on them we back each other up and everything like that eh but em Charlie, Claire and Suzanne I hate them. So it is like three I like, three I dinnae so*

*YP7: I wouldnae hang about with them if I was outside like I couldnae*

*R: right that's interesting isn't it so why why wouldn't you hang about with them when your outside?*

*YP7: just to be honest most of them are in here for either battering folk or bliming going like nicking cars like one boy's in for nicking cars the now and he's like he's like oh look at me ken like I'm like shut up*

*R8: hmm so what do you think's the difference then between the two girls and the boys what's ..?*

*YP8: lassies are more mature (unclear) yeah*

*R: (laughs) basically (laughs) yeah so is it the girls you kind of hung about with more when you've been in here*

*YP8: yeah*

R: hm hmm hm hmm so you've been able to have a laugh with them what other what other how else have you been able to get on with them?

YP7: we can (unclear) we can sit and talk about most things like I can get advice off of Ruth or Holly they can get advice off of me or stuff like that or whatever

R: hmm

YP7: it's quite good

R: so would you would you talk to them about kind of personal things?

YP7: well aye and no it really depends if I was in quite a good mood so aye but if I wisnae no cos' I ken quite a lot of the stuff that they've done and I ken why they've done it and everything and so I'm like if you's are telling it to me why should I not tell you so

R: hm hmm

YP7: and the fact that they listen

R: hm hmm

YP7: as well and

R: so so you would tell them stuff or you wouldn't?

YP7: I would but I wouldnae if you know what I mean I would tell them but if I was in a pee'd off mood I'd be like no

R: no so why wouldn't you tell them what would you be thinking then?

YP7: because sometimes if I'm in a pee'd off mood I get it in my head oh if I go and tell them they'll use it against me

The development of the sub-category 'split in group' can be seen via the extract from the memo 'split in group', see table 7 below.

Table 7. Memo – Split in Group

<p>The split in group category is supported from a number of different young people in different contexts. It describes separations between a small group of friends, a large group of friends as well as a young person who separates himself due to his belief regarding his leadership role. However that particular young person may have created the leadership role as a means to tolerate the closeness between other group members.</p>
---

#### ○ Sub-Category: Group Hierarchy

The young people described a 'group hierarchy' in terms of providing an understanding regarding how some of their groups of peers functioned. The sub-category 'group hierarchy' further consists of 'rules', 'earning', and 'power', see



figure 11. This sub-category reflects components to be found with regard to social rank, with the young people perceiving peer groups as consisting of a hierarchy and negotiating their position within it.

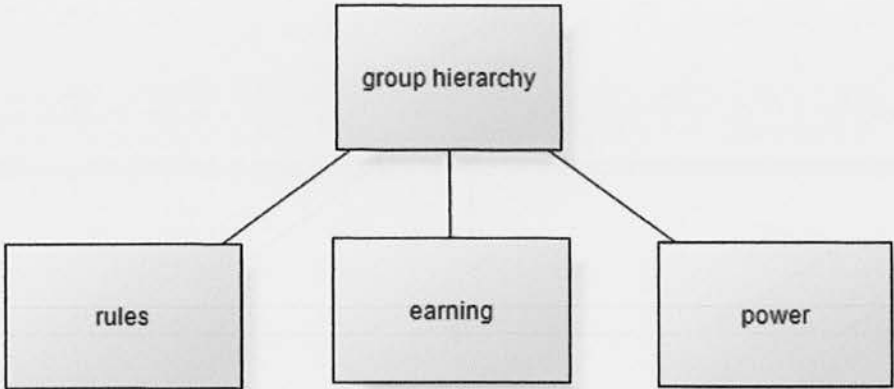


Figure 11: Sub-Category Group Hierarchy and Associated Further Sub-Categories

The memo regarding the development of the sub-category ‘group hierarchy’ can be seen in table 8. This memo identifies the link between ‘group hierarchy’ and the primary category ‘processing’, with some of the young people having a story to tell regarding how they fit in within groups of peers and with other young people having no sense of hierarchy in relation to peers.

Table 8: Memo – Group Hierarchy

<p>Group Hierarchy - comprises aspects regarding how young people organise themselves within their group of friends. Hierarchy was very apparent and processed by some young people and absent for others. Age may play a role in the experience of hierarch and it tended to the older young people who had a clear experience of hierarchy.</p> <p>Leader of a group was apparent, with the leader seen as powerful. Young people also noted the importance of the hierarchy by stating that they had 'worked hard for [their] reputation'.</p>
---

○ **Further Sub-Category: Rules**

The young people identified that 'rules' existed within groups and gave examples regarding their experience of group 'rules', as can be seen in the following quotations:

*YP1: And I know the rules of being in a group. I have been in quite a few myself. And I am like ken on my own.*

*YP5: No to break the rules.*

*R: Yeah and would he do that, or do you think that he might say 'no I am not doing that'*

*YP5: If he doesnae dae it then he kens that I will batter him.*

*R: Right.*

*YP5: But it is his choice.*

*YP5: Just so they kind of stick to the rules.*

○ **Further Sub-Category: Earning**

A further sub-category within the category 'group hierarchy' was 'earning'. This further sub-category is composed from examples regarding an awareness that certain aspects of group life have to be worked for, as the following quotations demonstrate:

*YP1: You sort of like eh you drink with them, you smoke with them and you go to parties with them. And if they get in a fight you back them up. And em (2 second pause), if they get beat down to the ground you run over and help them up and support them and get them out of the fight and everything like that. You are more respected, it is like you just basically you just get promoted up and that*

*YP1: You sort of earn your way up in a unit in all eh you start off down here and now I am up way up here eh.*

*R: Okay. So what have you done to work hard?*

*YP2: (Laughing). There was just. Just everything basically eh. I have just sort of eh. Just mostly being like being in. Or like ken if people need help or that, like money wise I will help them oot or just. Ken and I have never grassed on anybody for nothing in my life so. All of that sort of works in my favour, a bit.*

○ **Further Sub-Category: Power**

‘Power’ was identified as a salient part of the ‘group hierarchy’, as can be seen by the quotations below. The first couple of examples highlight a young person exerting ‘power’ in his adopted role of group leader. The third example is a young person using ‘power’ to support a family member whom he saw as being bullied.

*YP5: And see he doesnae like it and tells me to stop. I am going to pick him up and say ‘well how do you think your brother feels about that?’*

*R: Hmm hm, and why do you do that?*

*Y5P: To teach him a lesson about it. Because if they dinnae like, they think well if I have a stick I will batter him, but I’ll do this and I’ll do that and I’ll take the stick off him and hit him.*

*YP5: If they are getting like bad hits and one of them starts bleeding, I’ll say stop.*

*R: Hmm hnm.*

*YP5: And if they dinnae listen.*

*R: Hmm hm.*

*YP5: Something bad will happen to them.*

*R: hm hmm so you saw a bigger boy*

*YP4: uh huh*

*R: battering you’re your wee cousin*

*YP4: uh huh*

*R: em so you stepped in*

*YP4: uh huh*

*R: why why did you step in?*

*YP4: cos’ he was so young cos’ he was my wee cousin was only eleven and and but now he’s twelve*

*R: hmm*

*YP4: but the other bigger boy was fourteen*

YP1: *Em, I the main leader his name is Steve. Em, he thinks he is the leader but it is only because he is the oldest, but em to me I dinnae think that there should be a leader of a group and that eh so*

○ **Summary**

The core category ‘self’ has consisted of sub-categories that attempt to offer insight regarding the young people’s ‘sense of self’ as well as how they understand and function ‘interpersonal[ly]’ within groups. This core category sits alongside ‘attachment’ and ‘affect’ within the primary category ‘processing’, see figure 1.

● **Core Category: Violence**

‘Violence’ is the final core category to emerge from the interviews with the young people. The core category ‘violence’ will be presented in a descriptive manner, as have the other core categories. Table 9 contains some excerpts from the reflective diary in relation to entries made after interviews with young people.

Table 9: Excerpts from Reflective Diary

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Violence<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Linked anger and violence as the same thing. Appeared to have little or no alternatives to manage anger other than violence. Displayed little or no insight, did not want to reflect, and had not looked to the future.</li></ul></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Violence<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Appeared comfortable discussing violence. Sense of him wanting to display that he had a sense of right and wrong and that he had a line that he would not cross, in terms of really hurting someone. Sense of wanting to get across superiority, of himself and his friends.</li></ul></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Violence<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Unit manager and the young person acknowledged that violence had not been a major area of difficulty within her life. There had however been violent incidents that she was able to discuss. One such incident was extremely rich with discussion of self harming and with her relationship with her mother.</li></ul></li></ul>

The core category 'violence' incorporates the following sub-categories: - 'components of fighting'; 'reasons for violence'; 'unplanned violence'; 'depersonalised violence'; 'caught'; 'beginnings of regret'; 'drawing the line; and 'gauging behaviour', see figure 12 below.

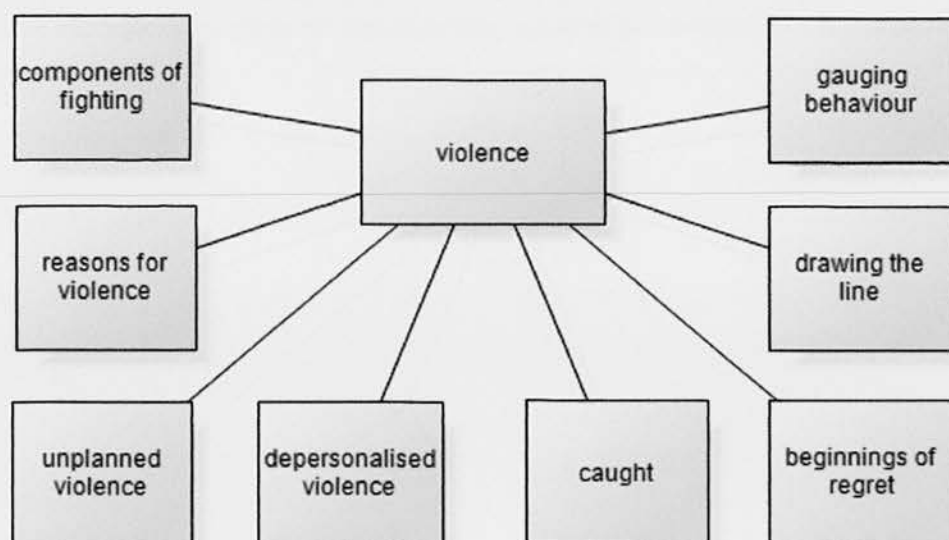


Figure 12: Core Category Violence and Associated Categories

#### ○ **Category: Components of Fighting**

The young people interviewed in the main gave a full description regarding participating in violence, these descriptions encompassed the sub-category 'components of fighting', and some of these descriptions can be seen below:

*YP5: Like I have ducked and I have turned around and punched him there(demonstrated).*

*R: Right.*

*YP5: But it was on that side (demonstrated).*

*R: Right.*

*YP5: Punched him in the stomach there (demonstrated).*

*R: Hmm hm*

*YP5: So he went doon like that. And I have tripped him up.*

*R: Uh ha*

*YP5: And started punching and kicking him, so he is lying on the floor.*

*R: So he is on the floor, right.*

*YP5: And I went doon on my hands and knees and started punching him as well, so.*

*YP1: Aye she [girlfriend] done the most of it eh cause she had the like you ken have you ever heard of a like a thing, it is called a waiters best friend. It is a sort of bottle opener.*

*R: Oh yeah*

*YP1: It has got a cork screw*

*R: Yeah, yeah*

*YP1: and a wee blade to rip the thing (foil bottle top) off and that eh. She had one of them. God knows where she got it from, but she had one of them. She slashed her on her back, she girlfriend slashed Sarah on her back and that was the knife I held up to her when I was saying 'I'm going to kill you eh and your brothers eh'*

*YP7: like just kicking him in the stomach when he was down*

*R: right so he was standing up first of all*

*YP7: aye and then he went down like he got put own on the floor*

*R: right*

*YP7: and then they all just started we all just started kicking into him*

#### ○ **Category: Reasons for Violence**

The young people presented 'reasons for violence', including using violence as a means to an end, and fighting for friends or as retaliation, as can be seen in the quotations below. The concept, fighting for friends, can be seen to be related to the 'group dynamics' sub-category. The sense of wanting to fit in with peers is reflected in both the category 'reasons for violence' and the sub-category 'group dynamics'. The concept fighting as retaliation can be seen to fit in with the category 'difficulties with affect', more specifically the sub-category 'exhilarating loss of control'. While fighting as retaliation focuses on why the young people become violent, 'exhilarating loss of control' focuses on the adrenalin rush and the lack of control in relation to perpetrating violence.

Violence as a means to an end:

*YP1: At the time eh when I was I was younger I was like 'can I go on the computer?'. And my Mum would be like 'nut, cause you are on it too much eh'. And I would kick off and I would be like 'oh for fucks sake, Fing this and Fing that and everything eh. And she would, just to keep the peace she would say 'Aye' and I would say 'yas' (yes emphasised) and everything like that but em it got explained to me why my Mum used to give in to me all the time, and it was because she was scared of me. And when somebody said that to me I was gutted I was like the worst thing in the world is to ken your Ma is feared of you eh. Cause you should be feared of your Ma, not the other way about eh. Your Ma's back hand going across you and that eh, you should be scared of that no thinking that you Mum is sitting there thinking that 'oh my God, if I dinnae give him this or that he is going to end up putting his foot through me or something eh' And that made me upset, I started crying when I heard that as well so. I started changing my ways when I heard that, cause one minute ken someone is gieing cheek to my Ma and I go up and sort them out and the next thing I know I am gieing cheek to my Ma, so it is no really worth it eh.*

*YP1: It has got me naewhere. I in the hoose it got me what I wanted, turns out it doesn't get you what you want it gets you put in a unit, gets you a pure folder full of charges em*

*YP2: Cause I dinnae think like I a lot of the times. Like especially recently, ken if I have been violent or whatever if I have been doing assault and robberies or whatever. I will use violence just as a tool and I will no be bothered if the person gets hurt or if they dinnae. But, I just want them on the floor. I just want them wherever. So I can do what I am going to do.*

Violence for friends:

*YP5: I am obviously going to stick up against that and start saying well, 'Aye I will come in with you', cause it is not going to be fair if it is going to be three on two.*

*YP3: and then eh this lassie grabbed my brother by the face so then I started like grabbing the lassie swinging her about and that and then her boyfriend tried to jump in*

Violence as retaliation:



YP6: *and then I was I was outside player on the ball and I dived in a bad challenge and there was a pole that was the goal post*

R: *hm hmm*

YP: *so I hit him on*

YP7: *and em my mum got arrested for breach of the peace and then they tried to arrest me and when I saw that they had the cuffs out and they had put the cuffs on my mum I turned round and a guy put them em put me flat on the ground and I swung my elbow up and banged him on the mouth and burst his mouth open so*

R: *Why did they want a fight?*

YP5: *Cause they kent the two boys.*

R: *Right.*

YP5: *But the two boys that they were going for*

R: *Ah ha.*

YP: *Had said something about their mum.*

#### ○ **Category: Unplanned Violence**

A number of the young people described taking part in 'unplanned violence', as the following quotations show:

YP3: *aye just eh me an my pals Lorraine and Anna were walking up town and there were these Chinese lassies with a leaflet*

R: *hmm hm*

YP3: *and then like my pal Anna pushed me for a laugh I went flying into the Chinese lassie and the Chinese lassie turned around and ken like tried to grab me by the hair*

R: *hmm hm*

YP3: *cause she must have thought ken I was trying to hit her*

R: *right*

YP5: *I remember one time I ran to the.. I didnae intent I was doing it, but I ran to the kitchen.*

R: *Hmm hm.*

YP5: *And grabbed a big knife.*

R: *Hmm hm.*

YP5: *And tried to run through with it.*

R: *Right and what were you going to do?*

YP5: *Stab him.*



*YP3: I don't know it just happens*

*R: it doesn't feel like it's something that's planned or ordered it just it just ..*

*YP3: it just happens aye*

○ **Category: Depersonalised Violence**

The 'violence' perpetrated by some of the young people could be described as 'depersonalised violence' as the young people reported not knowing the victim, examples are provided within the quotations below:

*YP5: But the middle boy was new and he never said anything.*

*R: Right.*

*YP5: So they went for the side people.*

*R: Hmm hm.*

*YP5: And I have went for the person in the middle.*

*R: So you went for the middle person and he was new and he hadn't said anything.*

*YP5: He hadn't said anything but he was still mucking about that group that was saying anything, so.*

*YP2: the only thing I thought after was like why did I even have to fight her?*

*R: right*

*YP2: cos' I didnae even know her*

*R: hmm hm hmm hm*

*YP2: that was about it*

*R: so what did you think then?*

*YP2: now I wisnae actually that bothered I just went over there and I just had a fight with a lassie I didnae ken*

*R: hmm hm*

*YP2: for nae reason at all*

*R: hmm hm*

*R: Right and was it [person fought] somebody that you knew or somebody that you didn't?*

*YP2: Aye well I didnae ken her that well but my pal knows her really well eh*

○ **Category: Caught**

The interviews with the young people also provided insight regarding being ‘caught’, generally by the police after perpetrating violent behaviour. The following quotations present the views of the young people regarding being ‘caught’:

*YP5: I have been caught and there is nae way oot and.*

*YP3: we were all just fighting and then the polis came and it all just started into a big pure raid*

*YP5: Because you have been caught and you want to try and get away from them.*

*R: Right.*

*YP5: But at the end of the day you cannae get away from them.*

*R: Hmm.*

*YP5: It just keeps hitting you and hitting you and hitting you.*

*YP5: Like getting caught from the polis.*

*R: Right. How does that make you angry?*

*YP5: Because you have been caught and you want to try and get away from them.*

*R: Right.*

○ **Category: Beginnings of Regret**

The ‘beginnings of regret’ were displayed by some of the young people in relation to perpetrated violence, as can be seen in the quotations below. The ‘beginning of regret’ may be related to the primary category processing, it may be that young people who have exhibited a greater degree of processing with regarding to the core categories (‘attachment’; ‘affect’; and ‘self’) are more likely to begin to demonstrate the ‘beginnings of regret’.

*YP1: Then when I went over it [perpetrated assault] in my heid and I was like in the cells for about 9, 10 hours or something I went over it in my heid and I was thinking you bullied that lassie, we battered that lassie. I ken what it is like to be bullied eh I have had it done to me quite a few times eh. And I was thinking I felt like the way that*

*she must feel and she was seriously bruised. I was like, I ken the feeling, I hate the feeling.*

*YP7: and how did it feel when you were actually joining in with it [perpetrating assault]?*

*YP7: I felt sick*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP7: cos it the guy never done nothing*

*R: hm hmm*

*YP7: and we were just sitting there battering him for absolutely no reason*

*R: right*

*YP7: and after it I felt so sick*

#### ○ Sub-Category: Drawing the Line

In terms of 'controlling behaviour' in the context of violence many of the young people interviewed stated that there was a line regarding taking violence too far, hence the sub-category 'drawing the line'. Generally the young people thought of the line in terms of the consequences for themselves rather than the victims. 'Drawing the line' has been placed within the 'violence' core category however the sense of 'drawing the line' is also relevant with regard to affect regulation. However the descriptions the young people gave regarding 'drawing the line' depict the category as reflecting a thought process regarding the consequences of their actions rather than being directly related to affect regulation. The following quotations demonstrate where the young people drew the line:

*YP5: I thought about standing on his heid but then I thought if I done that I had taken it too far.*

*YP5: Cause if I kilt him then I ken what would have happened to me. I would have been put away for ages.*

YP2: *or maybe, it just depends though if I thought that my pal was actually going to batter her to an extent when she was going to get really really hurt. Then I would have dragged my pal off. Because I wouldnae have wanted her getting into mare trouble or that eh.*

R: *So so how did it stop then?*

YP: *Somebody from the hostel just came running out. Just one of the staff and we just nashed.*

R: *So you ran away. So you said there that you would have stopped it.*

YP2: *Aye*

R: *Before it got too to bad you would have stopped it.*

YP2: *Ah ha*

R: *How would you decide when to stop it?*

YP2: *I wouldnae...if the lassie wasnae moving or that eh or if knifes or that came out eh. Then I would have stopped it.*

R: *hmm hm hmm hm is there a point in a fight where you would think right enough's enough and stop it*

YP3: *aye*

R: *or do you feel that you keep going?*

YP3: *naw there's a point*

R: *hmm hm*

YP3: *like if they didnae hit back or*

R: *hmm hm*

YP3: *or if they just cannae hit back or something*

R: *okay*

YP3: *or when they're on the ground .. like if they're on the ground and they aren't ... like if I went over to someone and punched them and they fell to the ground and didnae hit me back then I widnae keep hitting them*

R: *hmm hm right okay*

YP3: *but if like they fell to the ground and then got back up and then tried to hit me then I would hit them but ... that's about it*

#### ○ **Sub-Category: Gauging Behaviour**

The 'violence' core category also consisted of a sub-category related to 'gauging behaviour'. This category is comprised of examples from young people when they can be seen to weigh up the consequences of their actions in terms of becoming involved in violence, as the following quotation show:

YP2: *But when I was at my Grandad's and that, because they stayed in a nice area and it was like a good school I was going to and that. I think that I knew how much I*

*could get away with and how much, ken what I mean. Because I have always bee alright at speaking and that as well I could be aggressive without actually using my hands or my feet or anything. I think that there has always been that bit in me though that is .. just that wee bit of an edge that I am trying to get rid off.*

*YP2: Because they are all older they need to think about getting the jail and that. But as far as I am concerned there is nothing that is really going to happen to me. Apart from coming somewhere like this.*

*YP1: I grabbed that and went looking for the lady. I had a knife in my back pocket in aww and I was saying to myself. I was shouting about everywhere looking for him eh and eh in my heid I was determined to batter him with this pole and like stab him or something because he was trying to get out with my girlfriend, ken he was trying to throw kisses on her and everything like that eh, so but then em a member of staff got me outside eh and eh managed to calm me down and I realised what I was doing and that eh, and hand over the knife and the pole and everything.*

*YP5: but when they [police] have caught me. I think about the consequences.*

#### ○ **Summary**

The core category 'violence' has been seen to consist of the following sub-categories: - 'components of fighting'; 'reasons for violence'; 'unplanned violence'; 'depersonalised violence'; 'caught'; 'beginnings of regret'; 'drawing the line'; and 'gauging behaviour'. There were also a couple of under developed potential categories, 'age trouble started' and 'outcome of fight'. These potential categories documented the age that young people began to perpetrate violence and the outcome regarding violence that they had been involved in. These potential categories were however not sufficiently developed to become categories in their own right.

#### ● **Primary Category: Processing**

The primary category 'processing' can be seen to encompass the core categories 'attachment', 'affect', and 'self'. The emergence of this category has been apparent

throughout the interview and analysis process, as can be seen in the memo ‘processing’ below in table 10.

Table 10: Memo – Processing

<p>Memo – Processing</p> <p>Processing - this has felt like the emergence of a key theme throughout the interview and analysis process. Subjectively comparing interviews there felt to be a different level of processing with some young people living very much in the moment with no evidence regarding capacity to reflect, while other young people demonstrated a good understanding regarding their life and had a plan regarding getting 'life on track'.</p>
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The primary category therefore reflects the differing levels of ‘processing’ that the young people displayed in terms of their experiences related to early attachment relationships; affect regulation; as well as their sense of self and their interpersonal functioning. The following quotations highlight how some of the young people can be seen to be ‘processing’ life experiences. The quotations demonstrate how the young people are able, to a certain degree, to reflect on situations within their life. Generally the examples highlight ‘processing’ life experiences with a positive outcome. However, as the final example shows ‘processing’ can also result in a decision to continue to engage in negative behaviours.

**Gaining Control:**

*R: kay. So it feels like you are getting your life on track.*

*YP1: Hmm hm*

*R: You have learned a lot from your time in the units and you are learning how to make things work for you.*

*YP1: Hmm hm. And all the phone calls that I get from my Mum these days are like ‘I am so proud of you, keep it up’, and everything like that eh. And ken it makes you feel like so good inside. I have had a rough life (emphasised), but I got off my arse. I went out there and now like ken. I it is tiring, it is stressful and that ken, as soon as*



*everything starts falling into place, like a jigsaw, you feel great. But about half a year ago, maybe like (pause), last Christmas some time like that, my Ma wouldnae even speak to me on the phone.*

### **Exhilarating Loss of Control:**

*YP6: and I just go crazy but that's why I'm here to work on my anger*

### **Identity:**

*R: So you. It sounds like then you have out a lot of time and thought into how you want to be. How you want people to see you.*

*YP2: No really. It is just like. I have no really thought about it much. It is just what I have to do. It is like, sort of just like second nature now eh. Just how I act as a person eh. And I need to try and pull it back. Ken like even if I am like with my family or whatever and I will be sitting and they are like 'what are you snarling for?'. Ken I willnae meant to, but I will be like that right on the end of my seat.*

*R: So why do you have to be like that, do you think? What has made you be like that?*

*YP2: I dunno, to be honest. I think that I have sort of made myself like that. I don't know it is just how I sort of am. I I dinnae think that it is a bad thing to an extent as well. Cause I think that it is good to be able to look after yourself, but. It is bad, cause it is like, it gets to that stage where you cannae control yourself. I dinnae think that is good, cause if I ever decide that I am no going to be a bam anymore then it will be an offy lot harder to get myself under control.*

### **Gauging Behaviour:**

*YP2: I think that it is just an age thing, as well as eh. Probably still that wee bit of knowing what I can get away with eh. Cause when you sort of lose control and you go rag at twelve year old. One you are wee'er so you are no going to do that much damage. You will but mast of the time if it is somewhere like this you will get five big guys piled on you then you are no going to harm them that much eh. But when you are that bit older and that bit bigger then it is like, I can think better as well so I know. Like if I thought about it I would know how to really hurt somebody. And there is a bit of me that thinks about it and then I go 'no', because if that is going to end up with them in hospital. If I am going to put them in hospital, cause they have telt me to clean my room or whatever, 'was it worth it, na?'. So I am no going to do it.*

*YP2: I don't know I just thought I might as well. Cause I couldnae see a bad oot come. The worst case scenario she is no there or she is there and we all get lifted. So I thought that is no really the worst thing. Know what I mean. I can deal with that so.*

*And then I thought best case scenario we get loads of money and loads of drugs and it is like, and I am right in there so. The good out weighed the bad a wee bit.*

- **Model**

A tentative model was depicted to display the potential relationship between the categories described above, see figure 1b. The model highlights the primary category ‘processing’ which reflects the concept that the core categories (‘attachment’; ‘affect’; and ‘self’) are ‘processed’ to different levels for the different young people. The model then suggests that it is the concept of affect regulation or affect dysregulation that links the primary category with the remaining core category ‘violence’.

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding regarding the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent. The tentative model provides a framework regarding the role of early attachment experiences and the young people’s personal and interpersonal sense of self in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent.



## **4. DISCUSSION**

The discussion section will consider the qualitative findings, in relation to both the categories and tentative model presented, within the context of existing literature. The contribution the research has made will then be presented as will methodological considerations and the experiences regarding the researcher as being involved in the qualitative process for the first time, prior to outlining some final conclusions.

### **4.1 Qualitative Findings**

- **Categories**

The current research produced three core categories, 'attachment', 'affect', and 'self', which created the primary category, 'processing', and a fourth core category 'violence'.

- **Attachment**

Attachment was the first core category to be presented within the results section. This core category was further divided into categories, 'positive aspects of relationships' and 'negative aspects of relationships'. It may be possible to map 'positive aspects of relationships' to secure attachment and to map 'negative aspects of relationships' to insecure attachment. Secure attachment can be categorized by an infant having faith in the availability of a caregiver (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978), with the caregiver providing a secure base and instilling a sense of the relationships and the environment as predictable (Bowlby, 1969). The categories 'reliable relationship' and 'sense of safety' can therefore be found to map onto secure attachment experiences.

Secure attachment relationships 'possess characteristics such as goal corrected partnerships and open effective communication patterns' (Ontai, 2003). However open communication was not an aspect highlighted in terms of 'positive aspects of relationships' within the current research. Secure attachment relationships have also been highlighted in relation to: - 'higher levels of self-esteem, self reliance and self regulation of impulses and emotions' (Strathearn, 2007); individuals who are 'better able to form close relationships' (Strathearn, 2007); and social competence, empathy, sympathy, low levels of aggression, and the development of conscience (Fonagy & Target, 2002). 'Close relationships' was highlighted within the results section as a potential sub-category that was not fully developed. It may be that if the research was to incorporate more interviews that the sub-category 'close relationships' would be more fully developed. Some of the other aspects associated with secure attachment will be discussed in relation to the categories 'affect', 'self', and 'violence'.

The category 'negative aspects of relationships' consisted of the sub-categories: - 'unpredictable relationship'; 'rejection'; 'lack of trust'; 'physical abuse'; 'mum struggling'; and 'substance misuse'. The young people interviewed fell into one of two positions regarding discussing 'negative aspects of relationships'. The first position described young people who discussed negative aspects of the relationship with their mother openly. Throughout the interview process there was a sense that these young people had come to terms with their relationship with their mother and knew what to expect from it. Of these young people there again was split with young people either holding a negative view of their mother or almost minimising the

negative aspects of their relationship with their mother. There was a sense after the first few interviews that a developing category or theme may be in relation to minimising the negative aspects of the relationship with their mother, however the remaining interviews did not support the development of the category.

The components of attachment theory can be compared with the category 'negative aspects of relationships' in order to ascertain if the category can be mapped onto insecure attachment. The concept of proximity maintenance could be seen to incorporate the sub-category 'unpredictable relationship', whereby young people described a mother who was at times both physically and emotionally unavailable. The sub-categories 'rejection' and 'physical abuse' may be seen to map onto the concept regarding providing a secure base. Young people who experience rejection and physical abuse from their mother will be unlikely to view their mother as providing a secure base. The development of internal working models within an environment that constitutes a 'lack of trust', 'substance misuse' and a mother who is struggling is unlikely to lead to the young person having a sense of the world as being safe and predictable. The sub-categories to emerge from the category 'negative aspects of relationships' therefore appear to be coherent in terms of fitting in with a framework of insecure attachment.

Insecure attachment has been characterised by: - lower sociability, poor peer relations, symptoms of anger, and poor behavioural self control (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Ruffo (2006) notes similar experiences in relation to insecure attachment stating that 'insecure attachment with caregivers is related to a variety of problems in

adulthood. These problems impact functioning in all aspects of living, including one's experience of the external world, one's internal regulation of affect, one's self-concept and feelings about the self, and one's interpersonal relationships'. The relevance of these aspects of insecure attachment is more appropriately discussed in relation to the remaining core categories ('affect', 'self', and 'violence'). However Cassidy and Shaver (1999) stated that there was a relationship between young people exhibiting an insecure attachment style and caregivers with a psychiatric diagnosis. This relationship between insecure attachment and caregivers with a psychiatric diagnosis may be reflected within the sub-category 'mum struggling', which incorporates the young people's views regarding their mother being depressed, for example.

The core category 'attachment' appears to reflect literature with regard to the quality of attachment relationships as either providing a secure and insecure attachment experience. The tentative model places 'attachment' under the umbrella of 'processing' which subsequently has a role to play in the potential development of violence.

#### ○ **Affect**

The core category 'affect' consisted of the categories 'managing affect' and 'difficulties with affect'. There was a sense in the development of the categories 'managing affect' and 'difficulties with affect' that it was polarising the core category 'affect' in a simplistic manner. However the development of the categories were grounded in the narratives provided by the young people.

The category 'managing affect' consisted of the following sub-categories: - 'strategies'; 'calmed down'; 'confiding'; and 'gaining control', which describe how the young people went about 'managing affect'. As noted above secure attachment has been linked with the 'self regulation of impulses and emotions' (Strathearn, 2007). Further research may allow a clearer link between attachment and affect to be displayed within the current research.

Literature has highlighted 'cognitive reappraisal' as a method for 'managing affect' (Klignite, 2008; Loewenstein, 2007). 'Cognitive reappraisal' was not a strategy described by young people within the present research. In contrast to 'cognitive appraisal' strategies utilised had a more physical nature, such as walking away, for example. Mikulincer *et al.* (2003) used an attachment framework regarding affect regulation and produced a model relating to the availability of the attachment figure as enabling affect regulation.

The category 'difficulties with affect' consisted of the following sub-categories: - 'lack of affect', 'uncomfortable with affect', 'affect overwhelming'; 'lack of strategies'; and 'exhilarating loss of control'. The sub-category 'lack of affect' represented young people who demonstrated little thought with regard to affective states, or who stated either that they had 'no feelings' or that they had no problems in relation to affect. This sub-category therefore encompassed a number of bases that reflect a lack of acknowledgement or ability to manage affective states. The 'exhilarating loss of control' sub-category consisted of examples given by the young

people regarding an adrenalin type rush when they were involved with violence. This adrenalin rush was linked with a sense of loss of control to create the sub-category 'exhilarating loss of control'. Literature has documented a link between affect dysregulation and violence (Dankoski *et al.*, 2006; Krakowski, 2003; and Nestor, 2002), which can be seen to be reproduced within the current research.

Literature highlights 'difficulties with affect' in relation to 'poor awareness of emotional states; displayed difficulty discriminating between emotional states; exhibited non-specific verbal labels to describe their feelings; a displayed limited repertoire of emotion regulation strategies and ability to access these strategies under high emotional arousal' (Sim, 2002). Literature has also linked anger and subsequent aggression (Novaco, 2007; Kassinove, 2007), which fits directly with the experiences of one of the young people who stated that anger and aggression were the same thing. Novaco (2007) highlighted the notion of 'anger dysregulation', which fits within the current research in terms of 'difficulties with affect'. The findings of the research are compatible with the literature in terms of identifying difficulty regarding being aware, labelling and managing affect. The role of early attachment relationships can be identified as relevant in terms of regulating affect (Scroufe, 1991), with difficulty regulating affect indicating insecure early attachment experiences (Strathearn, 2007).

The core category 'affect' therefore provided an understanding regarding how the young people manage affect regulation. The literature and the current research also identified a link between affect regulation and early attachment experiences. The link

between 'affect' and 'attachment' can be further depicted in the tentative model (figure 1) which sees the level of 'processing' of both concepts being related to the perpetration of violence.

- **Self**

The core category 'self' consisted of the categories 'sense of self' and 'interpersonal'. The category 'sense of self' was further sub-divided into the following sub-categories: - 'identity', 'anxious'; 'low self-esteem'; 'own company'; 'unsettled'; and 'dangerous'. This category encompassed how the young people viewed themselves and how they wanted to be viewed by others. The category also reflected psychopathology in terms of anxiety and potential issues related to being on their own. Some of the young people stated that they did not like to be on their own, and that they had to keep busy if they were on their own. Young people being uncomfortable on their own may have a basis in feelings of abandonment. A couple of the young people also noted that they, at times, felt that they were dangerous. A sense of being dangerous could also fit with feeling 'powerful', which is placed within the 'group dynamics' sub-category, within the 'interpersonal' category. One of the young people who described feeling 'dangerous' was surprised by the feeling of 'power' that he experienced, whereas another young person constructed her view of herself as being dangerous in relation to her intellect and her lack of inhibition regarding perpetrating violence.

Glas (2006) discussed 'sense of self' as being 'tied to one's experiences and activities'. This can be related to the sub-categories within 'sense of self' as



describing their experiences leading to feelings of being 'unsettled', 'anxious' and exhibiting 'low self-esteem'. The activities of the young people, namely being involved in violence can be seen to contribute to a feeling of being 'dangerous'. Zaff and Hair (2003) identified components of self as including 'identity' and self-esteem. These components are reflected in the sub-categories 'identity' and 'low-self esteem'. Zaff and Hair (2003) further states that there is a necessity for a 'strong sense of self in order for an individual to develop positively throughout life'. 'Low self-esteem', rather than self-esteem was identified as a sub-category and low self-esteem has been associated with insecure attachment (Strathearn, 2007). Evanson (2008) found that self-esteem was linked with positive well-being, and the formation of a positive role identity. The 'sense of self' described in the present research can be seen to reflect the experiences and activities of the young people interviewed and perhaps provides an insight regarding psychopathology and the presence of violent behaviour.

The core category 'self' also consisted of the category 'interpersonal'. The category 'interpersonal' was developed to encompass how the young people functioned within and experienced being part of a group. The sub-category 'group dynamics' was created to described how the young people found themselves to be 'fighting to fit in' and how they experienced 'split[s] in [the] group'. The young people offered many examples regarding 'fighting to fit in', with reasons stemming from being the same as their friends, not letting their friends down, and trying to impress friends. 'Group hierarchy' was developed to further describe how and where the young people saw themselves as fitting in within a group. The young people gave a clear understanding regarding group 'rules', often in relation to viewing themselves as a leader of the



group, who saw their duty as enforcing the group 'rules'. The young people however did not offer a sense regarding the purpose of 'rules', as a means to help the group function. The young people were however aware that position within a group was to be 'earned', and that group members could move up the hierarchy within the group. The group leader was viewed as being the most 'powerful' within the group.

Literature regarding 'group dynamics' presents the concept of 'faultlines' (Shaw, 2004; Thatcher *et al.*, 2003), as a way to describe a 'split in group'. Thatcher *et al.* (2003) discussed 'faultlines' as being positively related to conflict and negatively related to morale and performance within the group. One instance of a 'split in group' that was described within the current research was in relation to conflict, whereas other splits appeared to be between males and females. Mast (2002) discussed gender in terms of ascertaining gender differences within hierarchical structures and found that males and females operate differently within hierarchical organizations, with females initially being 'less hierarchically organized than men'. It may be therefore that splits between males and females within the secure units where the young people were living were in relation to differences regarding how they function within a hierarchy. However young people interviewed pointed out differing levels of maturity as being at the root of splits between boys and girls.

Literature regarding 'group hierarchy' relates the concepts of 'power' and dominance (Islam & Zyphur, 2005) and 'power' and leadership (Giessner & Schubert, 2007). Islam and Zyphur (2005) found that 'power' and dominance were related with the

more power an individual emanated the more dominant he became. Person (2003) discusses power as a drive for 'dominance over other people'. Giessner and Schubert (2007) stated that 'leadership implies power'. Hartley and Hartley (1952) define leadership as being 'based on a perceptible differentiation of power to initiate activity within a group and also that it involves a position of high status within some hierarchical structure'. The current research presented 'power' as being in relation to being group leader and ensuring group 'rules' were adhered to. The concept of 'power' within the scope of the current research is perhaps limited in comparison with the literature.

In discussing the core category 'self' it is apparent that it encompasses a great deal of literature, in terms of 'sense of self', 'group dynamics' and 'group hierarchy' which is perhaps out with the scope of this research. The core category 'self' and in particular the 'interpersonal' category can be seen to reflect literature regarding social rank, as a system to describe how individuals function within a group.

The core category 'self' can be seen to relate the core category 'attachment' and it may be argued that, in line with the findings of Sloman *et al.* (2002), that 'group hierarchy' was used a method of affect regulation in the absence of secure attachment experiences. This claim requires further clarification with further research. The current research does however provide a tentative model (figure 1) which relates the level of 'processing' of the core categories 'self', together with 'attachment' and 'affect' as being instrumental in the perpetration of 'violence'. The concept of 'processing' fits directly with the core category 'self' regarding how the

young people organized themselves within their groups, as was discussed in the memo regarding 'group hierarchy', see table 5. There was a sense that 'processing' regarding 'group hierarchy' was perhaps related to age, with the older young people describing a stronger more processed idea of 'group hierarchy' and where they fitted within it.

#### ○ **Processing**

Throughout the process of interview and the analysis of the transcripts there appeared to be a distinction between young people who had processed life experiences to some degree and therefore had some understanding regarding their life experiences and some strategies in terms of managing these experiences and young people who had not processed experiences and hence had no strategies. There was a sense that age may be a relevant factor, with some of the older young people appearing to present a greater degree of processing regarding past experiences and future aspirations. It was however not possible to ascertain if age was a relevant factor due to the small number of young people that were interviewed.

The primary category 'processing' has been demonstrated as encompassing the core categories 'attachment', 'affect' and 'self', which are then jointly related to the perpetration of violence.

#### ○ **Violence**

The core category 'violence' was comprised of the following sub-categories: - 'components of fighting'; 'reasons for violence'; 'unplanned violence';

'depersonalised violence'; 'caught'; 'beginnings of regret'; 'drawing the line'; and 'gauging behaviour'. The young people interviewed appeared to find discussing the subject of 'violence' to be relatively easy as compared with discussing 'attachment' and 'affect', for example. This may be due to the role that violence has led in their lives in terms dictating where they live. Also for many of the young people they had been involved in violence in the very recent past and perhaps accessing memories regarding violence was therefore easier than accessing memories from early attachment relationships.

The young people in discussing 'violence' although at times stating that the violence was 'unplanned' or 'depersonalised', were able to give reasons for the 'violence' taking place. Often 'violence' was in relation to friends, when for example they were joining in a fight that a friend had started. 'Fighting for friends' was a sub-category within the 'group dynamics' category that fits also within the current discussion regarding 'reasons for violence'. Fitting in can be seen to be a reason that young people were violent, and is therefore worthy of mention under both the categories 'violence' and the sub-category 'group dynamics'. The experience of coding will be discussed within the section Qualitative Process, within this discussion section.

'Violence' was also in relation to retaliation when the young people became angry or when they took the perspective that they needed to stand up for themselves. One young person however discussed using 'anger as a means to an end' in terms of achieving control over his mother. The same young person went on to display the

‘beginnings of regret’ in terms of his treatment of his mother and the fact that he had intimidated her.

Literature regarding ‘violence’ and young people does not reflect neatly the sub-categories that are presented within the current research. Snyder *et al.* (2007) discussed ‘the origins of physical aggression and violence from a developmental perspective’ to focus ‘on how anger regulation and social contingencies in parent-child and peer interaction contribute to early development of aggression’. Literature was also found to highlight the ‘cycle of violence’ (Almont, 2003) and to identify a link between young people who are violent and in need of mental health and/or youth justice services (Biven, 2002; Kuehl, 2006). Helin *et al.* (2004) however presents literature regarding the perpetration of violence against parents, which was reflected within the current research in relation to one of the young people. The developmental path of the ‘cycle of violence’ was described by Almont (2003), ‘violence occurs in many contexts including global, communal, familial, and interpersonal violence. Exposure to violence in these systems contributes to the way in which children learn to solve problems and cope with life's pressures. Repeated and intensive exposure to violence proliferates aggressive behaviour in young people, hence, leading many of them to commit violent crime themselves. The victim of violence often becomes the perpetrator, thus, the cycle of violence continues’.

Ilomaki (2006) presents a relationship whereby young people who have experienced physical abuse from their parents are more likely to go on to develop conduct disorders and to be ‘violent’. Biven (2002) identifies an ‘interface between mental

health considerations and the criminal justice system' in relation to young people who have been violent. Kuehl (2006) discuss violent young people as being 'hurt' rather than 'bad', as a result of life experiences and loss. The literature therefore provides a historical development of violence for young people. Whereas the current research presents a descriptive picture in the present moment regarding a young person's experience of perpetrating 'violence'.

Throughout the interview process there were differences regarding how the young people engaged with the subject matter 'violence'. Some of the young people presented themselves as victims, in terms of feeling that they had to fit in with friends. Other young people presented as powerful and dutiful, while yet others presented as out of control.

The level of 'processing' a young person was seen to have carried out with regard to early attachment experiences, affect regulation and their personal and interpersonal 'sense of self' has been found to relate to their perpetration of violence, as depicted within the tentative model (figure 1b).

## **4.2 Model**

The aim of the current research was to ascertain the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation of young people who have been violent. A tentative model was created that depicted how the core categories may be connected in terms of improving understanding regarding why young people are violent. This model held central the primary category of 'processing' that reflects if

and how the young people have made sense of their early attachment experiences, their experiences with respect to affect regulation and their sense of self on both an individual and an interpersonal level. Some of the young people interviewed appeared to have an understanding and acceptance regarding early attachment experiences. While some of the young people presented as having made progress regarding managing affect. In the same vein some of the young people had developed a strong 'sense of self'. However for other young people they demonstrated existing very much minute to minute with no reflection regarding the past and no thought to the future. The aim of the model is to reflect how the relevant categories or concepts are related in the development of violence for young people.

### **4.3 Contribution**

The present research can be seen to have contributed to improving insight regarding why young people are violent, with implications for both research and professional practice.

- **Research Implication**

There has been limited research regarding the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in affect regulation for young people who have been violent. The current research therefore addresses this by filling a gap in the literature. The current research identifies the 'processing' of attachment experiences, affect regulation and the development of both personal and interpersonal sense of self as important in the perpetration of 'violence'. The current research is felt to be topical, relevant, and it 'listens' to young people themselves, fitting in with developments within Youth Justice.



The qualitative nature of the research allows a rich presentation of important factors in improving understanding regarding why young people are violent. The factors to be taken from this research are that ‘processing’ life events around ‘attachment’ experiences, ‘affect’ regulation, and a sense of ‘self’ are relevant in improving understanding regarding why young people are violent. It may be that further research around how young people ‘process’ life experiences would be beneficial. A second factor to be taken from this research is in relation to more specifically how young people manage ‘affect’. This research demonstrated that where young people were able to manage affect, they were able to restrict their use of violence. Further research regarding managing ‘affect’ in addition to the role of ‘processing’ life events may also be beneficial.

- **Professional Practice Implication**

The factors identified above in relation to ‘research implications’ are also relevant for professional practice. First of all this research is based in the experiences of young people themselves, which allows some level of generalizability to similar populations of young people. The relevant factors highlighted above, namely that ‘processing’ and managing ‘affect’ are relevant in improving understanding regarding why young people are violent are also directly relevant for professional practice.

The findings of the present research, as depicted in the tentative model, can therefore be used directly when working with young people with a history of violence.

Therapy to work with core psychological processes in terms of aiding reflection and ‘process[ing]’ of life experiences at one level and a symptom reduction based input regarding managing ‘affect’, may prove beneficial to young people who have been violent.

#### **4.4 Methodological Considerations**

- **Strengths**

The methodological strength of the current research was viewed as being related to the qualitative methodology, recruitment and supervision.

- **Qualitative Methodology**

The chosen qualitative methodology was seen as a strength regarding the current research. The qualitative methodology has allowed a rich description and possible model regarding how relevant concepts are related in the development of violence for young people. A quantitative methodology would not have allowed for the same intricacy regarding providing description of the key concepts.

- **Recruitment**

The recruitment process will also be discussed in relation to methodological weaknesses however the relationship that the researcher was able to build with staff and in particular the managers of secure accommodation was an identified strength of the current research. The staff within the secure units were able to identify and approach young people to ascertain if they were interested in taking part in the research. This was as outlined within the ethical procedure and it can be seen to be

beneficial for the young people to be initially approached by a member of staff that they know and are comfortable with rather than a researcher that they do not know.

- **Supervision**

The role of supervision for a first time qualitative researcher was highly valued. There was a sense throughout the process of the researcher taking ownership of the process. Supervision was paced at a level to allow the researcher to take ownership of the process and the qualitative methodology allowed this process to be documented and reflected on within the reflective diary.

- **Methodological Weaknesses**

The methodological weaknesses of the current research were identified as being: - the researcher as a first time qualitative researcher; recruitment; selection bias; theoretical saturation; and follow-up.

- **Researcher as First Time Qualitative Researcher**

The researcher as first time qualitative researcher will be further discussed within the section regarding the qualitative process below. However, it is worthy of note that the inexperience of the researcher as a qualitative researcher may be viewed as a methodological weakness. Quantitative research is conducted in a primarily linear manner, with literature search, data gathering and analysis and write-up. However the qualitative process demands the juggling of many components together. Therefore the researcher is to focus on research methodology, memo writing, writing reflexive diary, coding data and using new computer software at the same time. The

process as a first time researcher is taxing and it may be that the quality of the research has suffered due to the inexperience of the researcher.

The researcher did however enjoy the process of carrying out qualitative research, and approached the task with enthusiasm in terms of becoming proficient with the components of qualitative research mentioned above and seeing the progression of the research through to the final stages in terms of producing a tentative model. It may also be argued that enthusiasm for ones research is one of the most important components in ensuring good quality research. The collaboration with experienced supervisors also helped ensure the quality of the research.

#### ○ **Recruitment**

Recruitment, although discussed above as a methodological strength can also be viewed as a methodological weakness. The time scale was short in terms of recruitment therefore many of the young people interviewed were from within one secure unit. The power to generalise from the current research to young people who have been violent may therefore be limited. The researcher did however use the time available as proficiently as possible by beginning to build relationships with key staff in terms of recruitment prior to gaining ethical approval, with a view to being at the stage of identifying and interviewing the young people as soon as ethical approval was granted.

- **Selection Bias**

The young people interviewed were first of all identified and approached by a member of staff that they were currently or had previously been working with. Staff were therefore likely to identify young people whom in their view would be suitable to take part in the research. Also in relation to selection bias there was a power differential regarding the young people and the staff and it may be that for some of the young people they thought that they should take part in the research, whether they wanted to or not. There were however young people who had been identified but stated that they did not wish to take part in the research.

- **Theoretical Saturation**

Theoretical saturation was not reached within the present research. This may be partly due to the small number of young people interviewed, the short time scale and also due to the breadth of areas discussed during the interviews. However the researcher is aware that experienced qualitative researcher have challenged the realistic achievability of theoretical saturation (Willig, 2001; Charmaz, 2006). The categories presented are therefore a reflection of the interviews and analysis at a particular point in time, which would perhaps alter if the research process was to continue.

#### **4.5 Qualitative Process**

The qualitative process or the research process more generally benefits regarding reflections from the researcher. Reflection includes a sense of relevant issues

regarding being a first time qualitative researcher, reflexivity and in relation to the role of the researcher as a researcher rather than a clinician.

- **First Time Qualitative Researcher**

The researcher, although reasonably experienced in quantitative research methods was new to qualitative research. This was a conscious development to use qualitative research methods as they appeared to fit the research question and also to broaden the experience of the researcher with the support of experienced qualitative researchers. The process for a first time qualitative researcher is however demanding. The researcher needed to become familiar with literature regarding qualitative methodology, while getting to grips with the components of the methodology such as memo-writing and keeping a reflective diary. The researcher also had to become competent with regard to using new computer software to manage the data, by coding and analysing the data to produce free nodes and tree nodes in the production of categories. As has been highlighted throughout the results section and mentioned within the discussion section, there were identified instances of coding that appeared to fit into more than one category. The researcher has aimed to be transparent in the process of deciding where certain codes belong. It is anticipated that in the future as a more experienced qualitative researcher that coding may be done more efficiently. However it is noted that this may not be the case and that transparency regarding which categories codes are placed in may be the best that can be expected.

The researcher therefore did find the process challenging, although also has found it to be a positive learning experience. The use of qualitative research methods appears

to hold an important place with regard to providing a rich description of phenomena studied.

- **Reflexivity**

The process of reflexivity within the current research allowed the chief researcher to chart the research process, with the researcher as integral to that process. A reflective diary and memos were used to record thoughts regarding the research process and emerging themes. The process of reflexivity allowed earlier interviews to shape subsequent interviews. The chief investigator found keeping a reflective diary and memos invaluable as a means to both chart the research process and to place the chief investigator within that process as transparently as possible.

- **Researcher versus Clinician**

The process of conducting interviews as part of a qualitative process highlighted the role of the researcher as a researcher, rather than as a clinician. The researcher was very aware throughout the process that a research interview differed from clinical interview. There was also a sense from the researcher regarding covering all the areas that were highlighted within the research questions. Through the process of the interviews the researcher was able to relax somewhat and allow the young person to tell their story. The process of conducting research interviews will nevertheless continue to evolve for the researcher.



#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The current research has used qualitative methodology to investigate the role of early attachment experiences and social rank in the affect regulation for young people who have been violent. Qualitative findings have presented descriptively four core categories: - 'attachment'; 'affect'; 'self'; and 'violence'. A primary category 'processing' was identified as being central to producing a tentative model which demonstrates a relationship between the core categories. The tentative model identified the level to which young people have made sense or 'processed' their early attachment experiences, their experiences with respect to affect regulation and their sense of self on both an individual and an interpersonal level.

Further research may be able to elucidate upon the tentative model found within the present research in terms of confirming the finding of Sloman *et al.* (2002) that social rank is a system use to regulate affect when attachment systems have been insufficient in terms of regulating affect. Further research with a larger number of participants may be allow further analysis of demographic variables such as age and gender.

It is hoped that the findings have implications for both academic and clinical domains, with the result of improving well-being for young people who have been violent.

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## **6 APPENDICES**

### **6.1 NHS Research Ethics Committee Approval**



telephone 0131 536 9000  
Fax 0131 536 9009  
[www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk)

**Lothian**

**Lothian Local Research Ethics Committee 03**

Deaconess House  
148 Pleasance  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9RS

Telephone: 0131 536 9022  
Facsimile: 0131 536 9346

19 September 2008

Mrs Victoria Millar  
11 Liberton Brae  
Edinburgh  
EH16 6A

Dear Mrs Millar

**Full title of study:** The role of early attachment experiences and social rank  
in affect regulation for adolescents who have been  
violent.  
**REC reference number:** 08/S1103/27

Thank you for your letter of 23 July 2008, responding to the Committee's request for further information on the above research and submitting revised documentation.

The further information was considered by the chair on behalf of the Committee.

**Confirmation of ethical opinion**

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation as revised, subject to the conditions specified below.

**Ethical review of research sites**

The favourable opinion applies to the research sites listed on the attached form.

**Conditions of the favourable opinion**

The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met prior to the start of the study.

Management permission or approval must be obtained from each host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

Management permission at NHS sites ("R&D approval") should be obtained from the relevant care organisation(s) in accordance with NHS research governance arrangements. Guidance on applying for NHS permission is available in the Integrated Research Application System or at <http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk>.

**Approved documents**

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:



Document	Version	Date
Application revised July	1	2008
Investigator CV		
Investigator CV	CI	
Protocol	2	23 July 2008
Covering Letter		16 May 2008
Compensation Arrangements		20 July 2007
Participant Information Sheet: PIS	2	23 July 2008
Participant Consent Form: PCF	2	23 July 2008
Response to Request for Further Information		23 July 2008
10.1 of application form revised		23 July 2008

### Statement of compliance

The Committee is constituted in accordance with the Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees (July 2001) and complies fully with the Standard Operating Procedures for Research Ethics Committees in the UK.

### After ethical review

Now that you have completed the application process please visit the National Research Ethics Website > After Review

You are invited to give your view of the service that you have received from the National Research Ethics Service and the application procedure. If you wish to make your views known please use the feedback form available on the website.

The attached document "After ethical review – guidance for researchers" gives detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion, including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Progress and safety reports
- Notifying the end of the study

The NRES website also provides guidance on these topics, which is updated in the light of changes in reporting requirements or procedures.

We would also like to inform you that we consult regularly with stakeholders to improve our service. If you would like to join our Reference Group please email [referencegroup@nres.npsa.nhs.uk](mailto:referencegroup@nres.npsa.nhs.uk).

08/S1103/27

Please quote this number on all correspondence

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project

Yours sincerely

## 6.2 Information Sheet

# **RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

## **Understanding why young people are violent**

### **What is the study about?**

The study is to improve understanding around why young people are violent, more specifically it is hoped that the study will identify important factors that lead young people to be violent. Research has identified possible factors such as early important relationships and social interaction as relevant in understanding why young people use violence.

I am doing this study as part of my training to become a Clinical Psychologist. The study has been checked by NHS Lothian Research Ethics Committee and the University of Edinburgh.

### **What would happen?**

I would very much appreciate it if you would participate in my study. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. A member of staff that you currently work with will initially approach you with information regarding the study. If you are interested in taking part we will meet once, when I will answer any questions you have about the study and then ask you to sign a consent form. We would then have the opportunity to talk, for no more than one and a half hours, about early important relationships with your family, subsequent relationships with friends and violent behaviour. If you agree to take part in the study and you would like your parents and GP to be informed of your participation, an information sheet can be sent to them.

### **Why take part?**

It is hoped that this study will contribute to a better understanding of young people who commit violent offences and inform appropriate care for young people. It may be that you would enjoy or find it useful to think about and reflect on relationships.

### **Confidentiality**

The conversation we have will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and the interviews will then be transcribed. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The recording will be destroyed once transcribed.

### **The results of the study**

The results of the study will be within my doctoral thesis and a copy will be held within the University of Edinburgh library. A summary of results will also be available for research participants and members of staff from Youth Justice and Edinburgh Connect.

### **Contact details**

If you would like more information please contact: - Victoria Millar, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Tipperlinn Road, Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Edinburgh, EH10 5HF. Telephone: 0131 537 6364

### 6.3 Consent Form

## Consent Form for Participant

Title of Project: Understanding why young people are violent

Name of Researcher: Victoria Millar

Please  
initial box

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated (23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008, Version 2) for the study named above. ☐
- 2 I understand that my participation is voluntary. ☐
- 3 I understand that my participation has no effect in any treatment I may be receiving. ☐
- 4 I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. ☐
- 5 I am aware that interviews will be recorded, transcribed and then the recording will be deleted. ☐
- 6 If you are under 16 years old and you agree, an information sheet can be sent to your parents and GP to let them know of your participation in the study. ☐
- 7 I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(if different from researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Version 2 – 23/07/2008

## 6.4 Transcript



Transcript 1

R: Ok, so we have gone through the information sheet. So you have got an idea of some of the things that we are going to be talking about today...

YP1: Aye

R: ...and if you find any of it a bit difficult just let me know and we can stop. Em, I guess the first thing that would be good for me to know is, you know this research is going to be about trying to find out about why people are violent just to sort of talk to me about a time that you have been violent. Do you feel okay about doing that?

YP1: Aye. Em (3 second pause, air expelled). The last time I recall being violent was the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2000 and this year

R: This year.

YP1: Hmm Hmm

R: So June this year

YP1: It was all to do with, emm. I was going through a really really bad patch at the time eh cause I was up at *unit*.

R: Right

YP1: And emm, emm I wasn't getting on well there the staff

R: Is that a secure unit as well?

YP1: Emm no it is kind of an open unit

R: It is an open unit

YP1: Emm, it wasney the best eh, staff wereny the best or anything like that. So it wasney the help I needed. I started just going out of my way to get 4 or 5 charges a day. And everything like that and then I got moved down here. And I had a girlfriend at the time and she stayed in the same unit as me, which is partially why I came down here. Cause you are not allowed

R: In unit

YP1: Aye. We are not allowed to have a relationship with other people eh when you are under the same roof eh

R: Right

YP1: So I got moved down here and em I thought that I had lost her eh because I got moved and she never and she never knew where I was cause the staff were not allowed to tell her.

R: Right

YP1: Eh. I finally seen her one day and eh brought her back here and everything and there was a laddy em started hitting on her eh and eh I ran up the stair eh and got the pole from the wardrobe thing the thing you hang your clothes on.

R: Hmm hmm

YP1: I grabbed that and went looking for the lady. I had a knife in my back pocket in aww and I was saying to myself. I was shouting about everywhere looking for him eh and eh in my heid I was determined to batter him with this pole and like stab him or something because he was trying to get out with my girlfriend, ken he was trying to throw kisses on her and everything like that eh, so but then em a member of staff got me outside eh and eh managed to calm me down and I realised what I was doing and that eh, and hand over the knife and the poll and everything.

R: So it was another, another guy that was trying to go out with your girlfriend basically and that made you feel pretty angry. So you got a pole, you had a knife as well. Did you find him?

YP1: Nut

R: You didn't find him, so staff, staff managed to kind of calm you down. What did they do to calm you down?

YP1: They would just stand talking to me. Saying it is not worth it and all that eh, you don't want to go to jail for this wee lassie and everything because eh ehh. She didnae treat me as well as I treated her eh so

R: Right

YP1: I was basically used and abused basically in that relationship, but I just thought, ken I really like this lassie, I am going to try and make it work some how but eh I went out my way eh and everything for the lassie and she didnae do anything for me eh so they explained it all to me and I finally opened my eyes, woke up smell the coffee. So I never...

R: So you are not seeing her anymore

YP1: No I have not seen her or spoken to her in ages

R: So how how long had you been at *unit* for?

YP1: I was at unit for a year and 2 month.

R: Oh right, so quite a long time and did you feel quite settled at any time there?

YP1: Nut

R: So not settled at all.

YP1: Not there. The only time I actually felt settled was during the period I was actually at *unit* and I wasn't actually there I was on extended home leave. When I was staying with my parents down in town. That was the only time I felt safe and settled around that, but as soon as I walked through those doors and that eh I couldnae settle in at all. It was really bad, but the first day I came here I settled in and I have been settled here ever since.

R: So what do you think made you be unable to settle at *unit*?

YP1: Well for one I was always anxious. It was the first unit I had been in eh and I was in there. I had just turned 14 when I was in there eh so em I went in a bit scared and they eh

R: So had you been at home before that?

YP1: Uh ha

R: This was the first time right so

YP1: and eh I was used to asking for something and usually like my Mum would say no, I would challenge her and I would end up winning the challenge and getting what I wanted eh. But the staff there they are like trained not to give in.

R: Right

YP1: and eh I didnae like that so eh I usually kicked off eh. They wouldnae come and try and settle you or they wouldnae talk to you or explain anything to you they were just straight on the phone to the police and that is you got a charge instantly. And em

R: So you didn't feel like you built up any good relationships with the staff there?

YP1: No not really. There was sometimes. There was sometimes me and the staff got on alright ahe but it all depends what mood I am in, it depends on what mood the staffs in. If the staff are in a happy mood and I am in a not so good mood eh then it would just be me for the rest of the day I would argue and fight with anybody, and stuff like that. But mostly em I wasn't as unsettled as I was near the end of the time and when I started going out with girlfriend which was about 3, 4 month maybe even 6 month. I think it was aye it must have been 6 month eh so em when she came along she was going out with a laddy in the unit before me.

R: Right

YP1: Ken, we were fighting over her all the time and em eh we would always argue, it was sort of like tit for tat eh and score points off each other and that eh. And if he like annoyed me too much I would ask him like for square go's and if he never came I would run up and start hitting him and that and it would be all my fault eh the

staff wouldnae see his side of it they would only see mine and blame me for everything eh. So if felt like the staff were just, they wereny right, it felt like they were just picking on me sort of thing, bullying me eh, so em. And I explained to the staff eh up at unit that I wasnae happy there, that I didnae want to be there so they went out there way actually for me to get the extended home leave and they managed to get it. I thought things were going well at home eh, but my Ma thought differently. So when we went back to the panel she sent me back. And I went back, that was that was when things started going really (emphasised) down hill, from there.

R: So how did that feel when you thought things were going pretty well at home and then you go to the panel and then you have got to go back?

YP1: I was gutted.

R: Yeah

YP1: I really was. I was like but ken. I was saying to my Mum that everything was going well, the only problem in the house was my sister cause she was I've just turned 16 I can do what I want' and that eh and she used to like attack my Mum and that eh and my Mum was like shouting and swearing at her eh she'd run at my Ma and hit her and everything. Because it is my Ma eh I'd go up and say to my sister eh you dinnae touch her again and anything like that and em after all that happened and ken my Mum probably said thank you me for sticking up for me and the panel comes up and it is my sister the one that is staying in the hoose and I am getting moved oot, I am thinking 'what's going on?'

R: Than didn't feel right then

YP1: Na, well I went back to *unit* eh, cause I had the choice of going in another unit but I thought em nut. I cannae be bothered with this whole settling in meeting new people.

R: Yeah

YP1: and all this sort of stuff eh so I just stayed with the people that I kent and eh I was like. To me everybody in *unit* was a bam basically.

R: So you didn't feel settled there

YP1: Nut

R: It was a bit of a shock to the system

YP1: Aye

R: First sort of going and learning the way, the first time you had been in a unit. So you said that you kind of went out your way to kind of cause trouble. What kind of trouble did you cause?

YP1: Em, eh. Breaches of peace basically.

R: What would you do to breach the peace?

YP1: I'd wynd the staff up eh until they were basically shouting at me and I would shout back and then I would get violent and kick off and I would vandalise stuff and everything like that.

R: Can you can you think back to an example of a time that you were that that happened a sort of one time that you can sort of talk me through

YP1: Eh em. I cannae remember what day it was

R: That doesn't that doesn't matter

YP1: I got up one day eh and I felt like hmm I'm gonna go up town the day, just for a laugh eh, just to hang about with some mates and I I was going out with *girlfriend* at this time eh so I got *girlfriend* up and em this was this other lassie in the unit her name was sarah, she was in the unit em. (2 second pause). She wasnae like a sort of all the time friend with us eh we used to use her and that cause she used to think that she was cool and she used to bring, she brought fags back even though she didnae really smoke and we would be like gasping for a fag and we would be like oh cheers and all that and geeze us a fag and everything you're the best. And once the fags were all gone we would hate her again eh. So we all got up, we all got up to go up toon. Cause Sarah, cause she is a vulnerable wee lassie eh so they wereny too happy about her going up town with us em (1 second pause). So they stopped her coming up town and eh they and they we went out the unit waiting on her eh just to no make it obvious that she was coming with us. So we were waiting outside. The staff found out cause Sarah went and said something. The staff locked us out the unit

and em took Sarah's bus pass off her and everything eh so she couldnae get up toon at all and restrained her to the ground and that and em

R: So were you not meant to go up town, at all?

YP1: Nut, we were allowed to go up town we just weren't allowed to take Sarah with us and that was the

R: Right okay

YP1: that was the plan eh so and then eh I am looking through the fire exit door and that eh and she is getting restrained on the ground and that and she is shouting my name eh help help *YP1* and that help me and that. And I am thinking what do I do, what do I do em so what I done was erm picked up a brick and ran up attacked the window I smashed it and I went through it and it was my key worker who who like came up to me he approached me first and tried to restrain me and get me back out the door and that. But I picked up a bit of glass and em I I went like that (sweeping attacking motion) with it , just to warn him off. Didnae mean for anything to happen eh I warned him off and I sliced his hand. He has got a big scar down his hand now and then em. I don't know it was a sort of adrenalin rush or something eh and you are thinking right eh everybody is doing what I say. I've got this piece of glass in my hand, I ken I shouldnae but now that I have everyone is doing what I do. So I ran

R: So you felt quite powerful?

YP1: Uh ha. So I eh ran up to him and I said back off back off and that eh. I ran up to the other member of staff, that was a lassie, there was two female members of staff one was called Lesley and one called shona. Eh and em because I felt powerful and all that and nae body would mess with me because I have got this bit of glass eh. I can still remember the exact words I said to them. I was like get off Sarah or this glass goes in you. And then Shona backed off and em Sarah got up and ran down the corridor and Lesley had chased after her not knowing that I was standing behind her with a bit of glass and Shona was like Lesley look out *YP1* has got a bit of glass. She turned around ad she was like no no no don't. Ken I was holding the glass up saying get away from her and that eh then we ran out of the other fire exit door eh I threw the glass away jumped on the bus and ran off. So I got angry that time because I thought I needed to help one of my peers so em jumped on the bus, got half way down morningside and got lifted.

R: By the police



YP1: Ah ha

R: So when you threw the brick did you actually break right through the glass and that was how you got in?

YP1: No it was like , ken how you get wired glass

R: Aye

YP1: It just shattered eh so I just ran in and booted it and it went through it so that was how I got in. I had to crawl like but.

R: Okay that is good, it is helpful for me. It is a really clear description. It feels like you have thought about that, you know exactly what happened and why.

YP1: Aye I have been over that story in my heid a hundred times, cause I am thinking, should I have done that or no. And then em the fact that like George was my key worker at the time eh. He has always been sound to me really and eh I just eh he was just trying to look out for Sarah. I didnae like that cause I wanted Sarah to come up toon with us and that eh so I ended up attacking him and giving him a massive scar on his hand and because of that scar he cannae bend his thumb properly anymore eh. So I kind of stopped him doing stuff to. I mean he was a professional golfer cause ken you have to hold that (motion holding a golf club). He cannae play golf anymore cause his hand. I mean that I spoiled his dreams and that

R: How does that make you feel?

YP1: I am gutted. I feel so sorry for him. I apologised to him and everything and he was like it's okay *YP1* I understand you were just trying to help Sarah. He, staff admitted that they should not have done what they were doing restraining her for that length of period. Because the lassie, Sarah was 16 at the time and but she is not as you know mature in the mind. So they were looking out for her sort of thing. But staff should not have let her do that and staff should not have done what they have done and that eh and I ended up going out my way and I basically spoiled my life because I got charged with possession of a lethal weapon, possession of a serious assault and eh breach of the peace